Mistress Branican

by

Jules Verne

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MISTRESS BRANICAN.

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BY

JULES VERNE

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JULES VERNE

AUTHOR OF "CÆSAR CASCABEL," "MICHAEL STROGOFF, THE COURIER OF THE CZAR," "AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY DAYS," ETC.

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MISTRESS BRANICAN.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

THE "FRANKLIN."

WHEN you part with friends on the threshold of a long journey, there are at least two chances of your never seeing them again ; those whom you leave behind may not be there on your return, and you, who go away, may never come back. Such calculations, however, were far away from the thoughts of the sailors who were preparing to get under sail on board the *Franklin*, on the morning of the 15th of March, in the year 1875.

On that day, the *Franklin*, Captain John Branican, was leaving the port of San Diego (California) for a cruise across the northern seas of the Pacific.

A fine vessel of 900 tons she was, too. Rigged as a three-mast schooner, liberally set with brigantine sails, jibs and poles, she carried jury-sail, top-sail and gallant-sail on her foremast. Very high in her aft quarters, somewhat arched in her bottom, with her bow so shaped as to furrow the water at a very sharp angle, her masts slightly bent and rigorously parallel, her galvanized wire rigging as stiff as though it were of metal bars, she looked the very latest type of those elegant clippers that North America uses so much to her advantage in carrying on her immense trade

and which vie in speed with the best steamers of her commercial fleet.

The *Franklin* had at the same time so strong a frame and so trusty a commander that not one of her crew would have accepted an engagement on another ship even with the inducement of higher pay. They were all going off with that twofold confidence at heart which is founded on a good ship and a good captain.

The *Franklin* was on the eve of starting on her first long trip for the firm of W. H. Andrew, of San Diego. She was to go to Calcutta, by way of Singapore, with a freight of American-made goods and to return with a cargo of Indian products for one of the ports on the coast of California.

The captain was a young man, twenty-nine years of age. Endowed with an attractive but resolute appearance, his features bespeaking unusual energy, he possessed in the highest degree that moral pluck, which is so far above physical courage—that "two hours after midnight" courage, as Napoleon used to say, which is ever ready for the unforeseen and can be relied upon in its full vigor at any time. His head was more characteristic than handsome, with his rough hair, his eyes aglow with a frank and sharp glance that shot like an arrow from his dark pupils. It would have been hard to find in a man of his age a more robust constitution or a stronger frame. You felt the warmth of his blood and the strength of his muscles in that vigorous clutch of his when he grasped your hand in friendship. One point there is upon which emphasis must be laid: the soul contained within that iron frame was the soul of a good and generous being, ready to sacrifice his life to save a fellow-creature. John Branican had the spirit of those lifeboat men whose *sang froid* enables them to achieve deeds of heroism without a moment's thought. Of this he had given early proofs. One day in the midst of broken ice in the bay, another time on the capsizing of a boat, he had

THE "SONORA" HAD RUN ASHORE . . . . (*p.* 3).

saved the lives of youngsters like himself. Nor in after years was he to belie the instincts of bravery that he had displayed in his youth.

John Branican had lost his father and mother just a few years, when he married Dolly Starter, an orphan, belonging to one of the best families in San Diego. The very modest dowry of this young girl was in perfect harmony with the equally humble position of the young sailor, who was as yet but a simple lieutenant on board a trading vessel. But there was hope that some day Dolly would inherit the fortune of a rich uncle, Edward Starter, who led the life of a settler in the wildest and least accessible part of the State of Tennessee. In the meantime, though, provision should be made for two, for three in fact; for little Walter—Wat, they called him for short—was born a year after their marriage. So John, as his wife easily understood, could not afford to give up his seafaring life for the present. When the time came, he would see what he should do, in the event of his reaping the inheritance, or of his saving up a competency in the service of the Andrew firm.

Meanwhile the career of the young seaman in the merchant navy had been made by rapid strides. As we will see presently he had pushed his way swiftly as well as straight. He was captain at an age when the rest of his colleagues were but mates or lieutenants on board trading ships. If so rapid an advancement was justified by his qualifications, it had been influenced also by certain circumstances that had deservedly drawn public attention upon him.

As a matter of fact, John Branican was a popular man in San Diego, as indeed in the various ports of the Californian coast. His acts of bravery had brought him to the notice not only of the seafarers but of the merchants and shipowners of the Union.

A few years before, a schooner from Peru, the *Sonora*, had run ashore at the mouth of Coronado Beach; there

was no hope for the crew if means of communication failed to be established between the wreck and the shore. But bringing a rope across the breakers was risking one's life a hundred times. Not a moment did John Branican pause. Away he rushed among the billows that were lashing against him, was tossed about on the reefs by them and eventually hurled back to the beach. In view of the almost certain death which he would fain affront again, the beholders endeavored to keep him back; it was in vain; once more he dashed toward the schooner, succeeded at last in reaching it, and thanks to his courage, the crew of the *Sonora* were saved.

A year later, during a storm that was raging 500 miles off the Western Pacific coast, Branican had had another opportunity of showing what hopes might be reposed in him. He was lieutenant on board the *Washington*, whose captain had just been washed overboard along with half the crew. Left on board the disabled ship with a handful of men, most of whom were wounded, he took command of her, and although unable to use the helm, he managed to get her under control, rigged up temporary masts, and brought her safely into port at San Diego. This hull which they were barely able to keep afloat contained a cargo valued at $500,000, and this happened to belong to the firm of W. H. Andrew.

The welcome the young sailor was accorded, when the *Washington* anchored in the bay of San Diego, may be readily imagined. Since the events at sea had made him captain, what more natural than that he should be confirmed in the post by the unanimous vote of the population?

It was then that the Andrews built the *Franklin* and offered him the command. The lieutenant accepted, as he felt himself quite equal to the task, his only trouble being the selection of his crew out of the numerous applicants whose blind trust in his ability made them desirous of serv-

ing under him. Such were the circumstances under which the *Franklin* was starting on her first trip in command of John Branican.

This voyage was quite an event for the whole town. The Andrew firm was justly considered one of the most reputable in San Diego. Well known for the uprightness of its business transactions and the solidity of its credit, it was administered with a safe and practiced hand by Mr. William Andrew himself. He was more than esteemed, was this worthy shipowner : he had won the affection of all ; and his recognition of John Branican's worth was unanimously applauded.

No wonder then if, on this morning of the 15th of March, a large number of spectators, let us say a concourse of the known and of the unknown friends of the young captain, crowded the quays of the Pacific Coast Steamship Company, to cheer him off with one last God-speed.

The crew of the *Franklin* was composed of twelve men, all told, good and experienced seamen, all of them belonging to the port of San Diego. The ship's mate was an excellent officer, Harry Felton by name. Although five or six years older than his captain, he felt in no way hurt at having to serve under him, nor did he envy him the preferment that made him his superior : in his opinion John Branican had well deserved the post. Both of them had sailed together before and mutually appreciated each other's qualities. Besides, anything Mr. Andrew did was well done. Harry Felton and his men were devoted to him, heart and soul. Most of them had already served on one or the other of his ships. They were as though one family of officers and men, a numerous family, which constituted his staff on the high seas and kept on increasing apace with the prosperity of his house.

So it was without the least apprehension, with eagerness even, that the crew of the *Franklin* were setting out on this

new enterprise. Fathers, mothers, and relatives of all sorts were there to bid them farewell, but after the fashion of people who expected to see them again soon.

"Good-by for a while, lads." It was after all but a six months' voyage, just a summer trip, from California to India, there and back from San Diego to Calcutta, and not one of those commercial undertakings or voyages of discovery which take a ship away for many a long year, sailing on the most dangerous seas of the two worlds. These seamen had been on very different cruises, and their families had often experienced a more sorrowful separation.

However, the preparations were rapidly being completed. The *Franklin*, anchored in the middle of the bay, had already got clear of the other vessels, the number of which proclaimed the maritime importance of San Diego. From the place where she was anchored the three-master would not need the assistance of a tug to get out of the harbor. Once the anchor weighed and the sails unfurled, a good breeze would take her quickly and without further trouble out of the bay. Captain John Branican could not have wished for more suitable weather or a more favorable wind, on that sea which sparkled yonder, off the Coronado Islands, under the rays of the sun.

By this time—ten o'clock in the morning—it is needless to say that all the crew were on board. No more sailors were allowed to go ashore again, and so, for them, the cruise had practically begun. A few rowing boats from the port, made fast to the starboard ladder, were awaiting those who had wished to embrace their relatives and friends one last time. Although the tides are not strong in the basin of the Pacific, it was better to start with the ebb, which would now be felt in a very short time.

Among the principal visitors on board were of course the head of the firm, Mr. William Andrew, and Mrs. Branican, followed by the nurse carrying little Wat. They were

QUITE AN EVENT FOR THE WHOLE TOWN (*p.* 5).

accompanied by Mr. Len Burker and Jane his wife, Dolly's first cousin. The mate, Harry Felton, a happy bachelor, had no intimate friends' adieux to receive. At the last moment, his employer's good wishes would not fail him, and he little cared for any other, save those of the captain's wife. These two he was sure of beforehand.

So Harry Felton stood on the forecastle, where half a dozen men were at the capstan weighing anchor. The metallic clink of the pawls could be heard as they went. The *Franklin* already began to heave a little and her chains creaked through the hawse-holes. The broad pendant with the firm's initials was floating from the top of the mainmast, while the American flag, flying in the breeze from the brigantine gaff, displayed the federal stars and stripes. The unfurled sails were ready to be hoisted as soon as the vessel had got a little under way with the help of her foremast and jibs.

On the fore part of the deck, while keeping his eye on the work that was going on, John Branican was receiving the shipowner's final instructions about the bill of lading, in other words the account of the cargo he had on board. Then, as the latter handed it to the young captain, he added:

"If by chance you were obliged to alter your course in any way, John, do the best you can in our interest, and let us hear from you from the first port you call at. Perhaps you will put into port at one of the Philippine Islands, as I suppose you do not intend going by the Torres Strait?"

"No, sir," replied Captain John, "I am not going to risk the *Franklin* in any of those dangerous seas round about North Australia. The course I mean to take is by way of the Hawaiian and the Marianne Islands to Mindanao in the Philippines, thence to the Island of Celebes, through the Strait of Macassar, so as to make for Singapore by the Java Sea. From there to Calcutta the course is clearly marked. So, I do not think the itinerary I have adopted can be altered

in any way by the winds we shall meet in the west of the Pacific. If, therefore, you should have to wire me any important order, please send it either to Mindanao, where I may put into port, or to Singapore, where I certainly will call."

"That's a settled matter, John; and on your part let me know the market prices in Calcutta as soon as possible. A change in the rates might make me change my plans as to your cargo on the return trip."

"I will not fail to do so, sir," was the reply.

At this moment Harry Felton came forward and said:

"All ready, captain."

"And the ebb?"

"Just beginning to feel it."

"Hold fast, then."

And turning anew to the shipowner, the grateful captain repeated:

"Again I thank you, Mr. Andrew, for having intrusted the command of the *Franklin* to me. I hope I may show myself worthy of your confidence."

"I am sure you will, John," replied the merchant. "I could not place my interests in safer keeping than yours."

Then after warmly shaking hands with the young captain he went to the aft part of the deck.

Mrs. Branican, with the nurse and child, had just come over to her husband, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Burker. The parting moment had arrived. Captain John Branican had now only to bid adieu to his wife and relatives.

As we know, Dolly had not been married two years, and her little boy was barely nine months old. Although this separation caused her intense sorrow, she buried it deep in her bosom, and bid her throbbing heart be still, whereas her Cousin Jane, naturally weak and without self-control, could not conceal her grief. She dearly loved Dolly, with whom she would often seek comfort when her own husband's

temper would be more violent than usual, and she could easily see the fears and anxieties that Dolly was trying to overcome. Of course Captain John was to be back in six months' time ; still, it was a parting,—the first they had had to bear since they were married,—and if Dolly had sufficient mastery over herself to repress her tears, it may be said that Jane cried for her. As to Len Burker, a man whose hard features no emotion had ever softened, he paced up and down with tearless eyes, his mind kept away from the scenes around him by heaven knows what calculations, and his two hands in his pockets. He evidently was not in communion of thought with those visitors who had been brought aboard by any feeling of loving sympathy for the departing friends.

Captain John took his wife's two hands in his and drew her to him.

"Darling Dolly," said he, "I am going away. It won't be for long—you will see me again soon. I'll come back to you Dolly, never fear. On my vessel and with my crew, what danger could befall us? Be a little woman, as a sailor's wife ought to be. When I come back, our little Wat, there, will be fifteen months old. Quite a big lad! He will be able to talk, and the first word I'll hear when I come back——"

"Will be your name, John," interrupted Dolly. "Your name is the first word I will teach him! We will be always talking together about you. You will write as often as you can, John, won't you? I will look out for your letters so impatiently! And you will tell me all about what you have done, and what you are going to do, that I may feel I am still and always with you when you are away?"

"Of course, Dolly, I will write to you. I will send you an account of the whole voyage. Why, my letters will be a regular log-book, with loving things to you in the bargain!"

"Ah, John, I am so jealous of the sea that takes you so

far away! How I envy those who love each other and who never have to part! Still, no—I ought not to think of that just now."

"Dear wifie, I beseech you, say to yourself that it is for our child's sake that I am going,—for your own, too,—to enable me to make you both comfortable and happy! If we get rich one of these days, I will never leave you again!"

Just then Len Burker and Jane came over. Turning to them, John said:

"Len, old friend, I am leaving my wife and child to your care. You are the only relatives they have in San Diego!"

"You may rely on us, John," replied Burker, trying to soften the harsh tone of his voice; "we'll be there, Jane and I; we'll look after Dolly."

"And I'll console her," added Mrs. Burker, "never fear; you know how much I love you, Dolly. I will come and stay a few hours with you every day, and we will talk about John."

"For sure, Jane," said Mrs. Branican, "for I shall be always thinking about him."

The conversation was again interrupted by Harry Felton, who thought it would never end.

"Captain," said he, "it'd be about time to——"

"Right you are, Harry," answered Captain Branican. "Hoist the main jib and brigantine sail."

The mate went off to give the necessary orders, which meant immediate departure.

"Mr. Andrew," said the young captain, addressing the shipowner, "the long boat is waiting to take you back to land, with my wife and friends. When you are ready——"

"Right away, John," replied the old gentleman; "and once more, my lad, God speed!"

"Yes, safe home," repeated the other visitors, who began

to make their way down the starboard side to the boats awaiting them.

"Good-by, Len! Good-by, Jane!" said John, shaking them both by the hand.

"Good-by! Good-by!" answered Mrs. Burker.

"And now, my Dolly, we must go!—there!" added John, "see, the ship is moving."

And sure enough the *Franklin* was giving the least pitch and roll under the brigantine sail and jib, as the sailors hoisted them to the wind, singing as they pulled the ropes.

In the meantime, Captain John accompanied his wife to the ladder, and as she was about to step down, he clasped her in his arms one last time, as utterly unable now to speak to her as she would have been to reply.

Then the baby, whom Dolly had taken from the nurse, stretched out his arms to his father, waved his little hands, and a cry escaped from his lips:

"Pa-pa! Pa-pa!"

"There, John," cried Dolly, "you have heard his first word before starting!"

Strong-hearted as he was, the young captain could not keep back a tear, which fell on little Wat's cheek as he stooped over him.

"Dolly!" he whispered, "good-by! good-by!"

Then turning quickly away, so as to put an end to this sorrowful scene, he shouted:

"Let go!"

The next moment the little boat, having cast its moorings, was slowly making its way to the shore, where its passengers landed.

The captain then busied himself with the final preparations for starting. The *Franklin*, freed from her last moorings, was beginning to feel the wind that was filling her flapping sails. The main jib had just been hoisted, and

the brigantine sail made the vessel luff a little, as soon as it was set. This maneuver was to enable the ship to get safely around a few vessels anchored in the bay.

At the next command from Captain Branican, the mainsail and the foresail were hoisted in such style as befitted so good a crew. Then the *Franklin*, getting to the larboard side, stood out to sea, so as not to have to change her course again.

From the extremity of the quay on which the crowd had gathered, they were in a position to admire these different maneuvers. Nothing could be more graceful than the elegant craft, as she swayed to and fro under the breath of the capricious wind. As she was rounding the other vessels, she drew quite close to that part of the wharf where Mr. Andrew, Dolly, Len Burker, and Jane were standing.

When he came within half a cable's length, the young captain could once more see his wife, relatives, and friends, and bid them all one last farewell with a last wave of his hand.

"Good-by! Good-by!" he cried.

"Hurrah!" shouted the crowd of spectators, waving their handkerchiefs.

He was such a favorite with all of them, was Captain John Branican! Was he not the one, of all her children, that the town had most cause to be proud of? Every man of them would be there on his return, as soon as his ship came in sight.

At the mouth of the bay, the *Franklin* had to luff to make room for a big mail steamer, and the stars and stripes gayly floated in the air when the two vessels saluted each other as they passed.

Mrs. Branican stood silently on the wharf watching her husband's ship as a fresh northeasterly breeze swiftly bore it away; and her longing eye remained fixed upon it so long as the mast head was visible above Island Point.

A Cry escaped from his Lips: "Pa-pa!" (*p.* 11).

The ship, however, soon rounded the Coronado Islands, which lie outside the bay. For one moment more, the pendant flying from the mainmast could be seen through the opening of a cliff . . . . then all disappeared from sight.

"Good-by, dear John; good-by!" murmured Dolly.

Why did a strange presentiment prevent her from adding, "Till I see you again"?

CHAPTER II.

FAMILY MATTERS.

IT now seems expedient to add some more definite touches to our picture of Mrs. Branican, who is destined to be brought so prominently forward by the various events in this story.

Dolly was at this time twenty-one years old. She was American by birth. But without going back too far into her ancestry, it would have been easy to find that she belonged to the Spanish or rather Mexican stock from which most families in these parts have descended. Her mother in fact was born at San Diego, and San Diego was already in existence at the time when California still belonged to Mexico. The immense bay, discovered about three and a half centuries ago, by the Spanish navigator Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, and originally named San Miguel, assumed its new name in 1602. Then, in 1846, this province changed its three-colored flag for the stars and stripes of the confederation and from that time forward it has been part of the United States.

Of medium height, with a face brightened by two dark flashing eyes, a fresh complexion, a mass of dark brown hair, hands and feet a thought larger than those usually found in Spaniards, a firm but graceful gait, features denoting characteristic energy as well as kindness of heart, such was Mrs. Branican. There are women that no eye

can gaze on with indifference ; and before her marriage, Dolly was rightly ranked among the young girls of San Diego—where beauty is anything but rare—whose charms attracted most attention. She was felt to be serious and thoughtful-minded, sensible and intelligent, accomplishments which could not but develop further after her marriage. Yes, no matter how hard her life's lot might prove to be, Dolly, when she became Mrs. Branican, would be able to do her duty. Having hitherto looked life straight in the face, and not through the glamour of a deceitful prism, she had grown up noble-souled and strong-willed. The love she felt for her husband would make her more bent on the fulfillment of her task. Should the opportunity ever present itself,—this was no commonplace saying when applied to her,—she would give her life for John, even as he would lay down his for her ; even as both would sacrifice themselves for their babe, whose birth had brightened the first year of their married life. They idolized that little baby who had just managed to lisp the word " pa-pa," as the young captain was about leaving both the mother and the child. Little Wat's resemblance to his father was already striking, with regard to his features at least, for he had the fresh complexion of his mother. He was strongly built ; easily he would pull through the usual ailments of infant life. Besides, he would be so lovingly looked after. Ah ! what dreams for the future the father and mother had already indulged in, on behalf of this little being who was still on the threshold of existence !

Most undoubtedly Mrs. Branican would have been the happiest of women if John's circumstances had allowed him to give up his seafaring life, not the least drawback of which was the necessity of their living apart. But when the command of the *Franklin* was offered him, how could she have thought of putting herself in his way ? And then, should she not take into consideration the needs of their household,

the requirements of that little family circle which might grow larger yet perhaps? Dolly's dowry was barely sufficient for the very necessaries of life. Of course John might reckon on the fortune that Dolly was to inherit from her uncle, unless indeed in the event of most unlikely mishaps—seeing that Mr. Edward Starter was nearly sixty years old, and had no heir but his niece. Sure enough her cousin, Jane Burker, belonged to the family on the mother's side, but she was in no way related to the uncle. So Dolly would surely be rich some day, but then it might not be for ten years to come, perhaps not for twenty. Hence, while having no anxiety for the future, John should needs work for the present. He was therefore quite determined to continue in the service of the Andrews, the more so as he had been given an interest in the commercial transactions of the *Franklin.* Being a good business man as well as a daring sailor, he had every hope of making his family comfortable while waiting for Edward Starter's inheritance.

Just one word about this American—an unparalleled specimen of his type.

He was the brother of Dolly's father, consequently the uncle of the young girl who had become Mrs. Branican. Dolly's father, his senior by five or six years, had brought him up, so to speak ; for they were both orphans. And owing to this the younger Starter had always felt for his brother a sincere affection, enhanced by an equally genuine sense of gratitude. Fortune having favored him, he traveled fast on the road to wealth, while Starter senior wandered astray on those by-paths which seldom lead to the wished-for goal. True he had been obliged to go very far West, buying and settling large tracts of land in the State of Tennessee ; still he had always kept up a correspondence with his brother, whose business kept him in New York State. When the latter became a widower he settled in San Diego, the birth town of his wife, where he, too, died

after the betrothal of Dolly to John Branican. The marriage took place as soon as the period of mourning was over, and the young couple began married life with nothing but the modest fortune left by the bride's father.

A little time afterward, a letter came to San Diego for Dolly Branican from Starter junior. It was the first he had ever written to his niece : it was very likely to be the last, also.

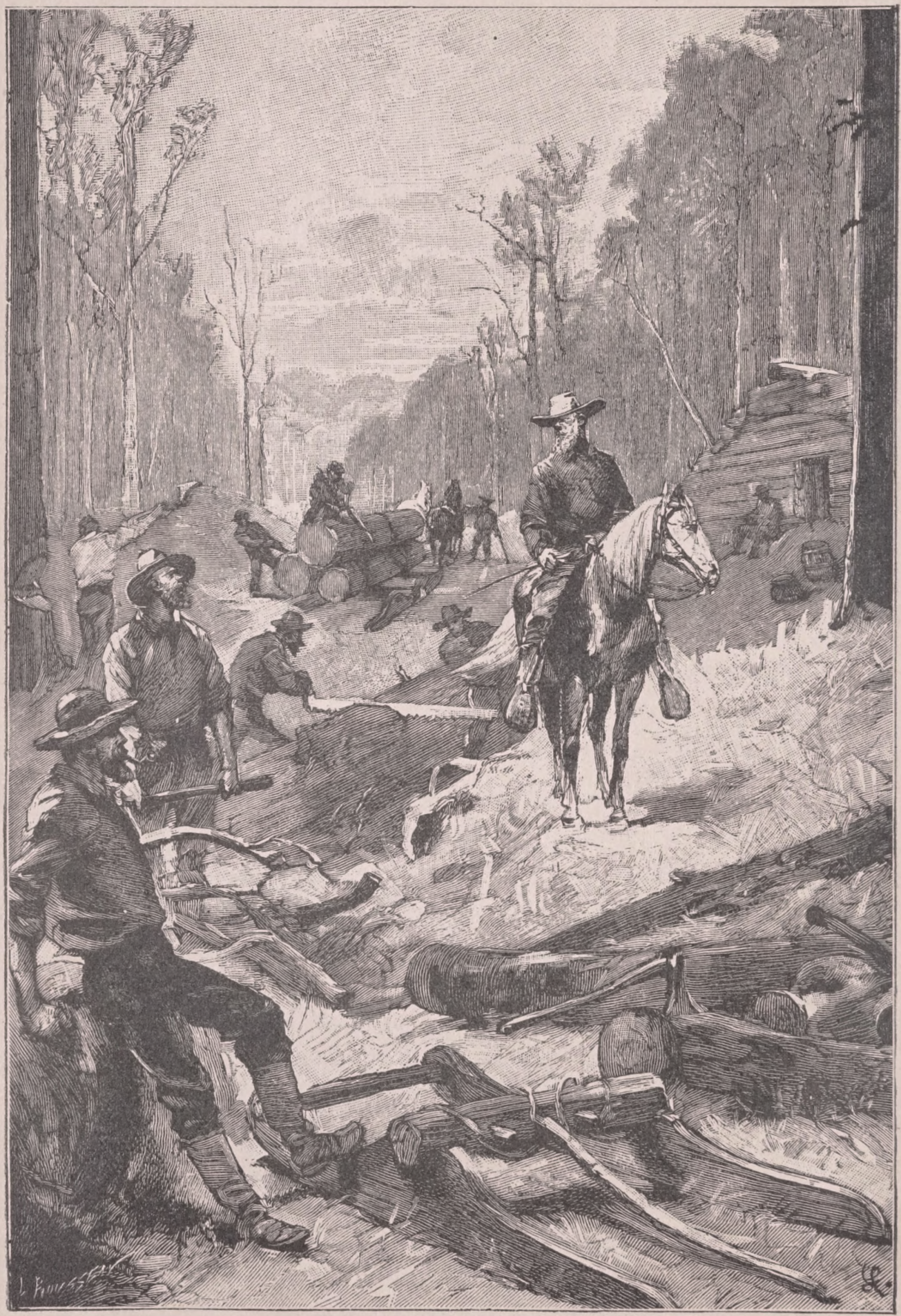
In substance this letter stated, in a style as concise as it was practical, that :

Although Starter junior was very far away from her, and had never seen her even, he did not forget that he had a niece, the daughter of his brother. If he had never seen her, it was because he had not come across Starter senior since the latter had got married, and again because his home was near Nashville in the furthermost corner of Tennessee, whereas she lived at San Diego. Now as it was several hundred miles from Tennessee to California, Starter junior had no possible wish to go there. And, as he thought the journey much too tiresome for himself to go see his niece, he guessed it would be just as tiresome for her, if she came to see him ; and he prayed her, therefore, not to trouble herself in this connection.

In truth he was a perfect bear ; not a grizzly with claws and fur, but one of those human bears who insist on living altogether outside the domain of social intercourse.

In any case this was not of a nature to annoy Dolly in the least. She was the niece of a bear, granted ! but this bear had an uncle's heart. He had not forgotten what Starter senior had done for him, and he would make his brother's daughter his sole heiress.

He proceeded to say that the fortune he would leave her was even now worth picking up. It amounted already to some $500,000, and would still increase no doubt, as his business out in Tennessee was getting on A1. The property



A Settler in the far West (*p.* 15).

consisted in lands and cattle, so that when the time came a good price could be got for it, and there would be no lack of bidders.

Although stated in this blunt, almost rough, fashion, so peculiar to the old-time Americans, what was said was said. The entire fortune of Starter junior would be left to Mrs. Branican, or her children, in the event of the race of the Starters being kept up (*sic*) through her. Should Mrs. Branican die without issue, this fortune was to go to the State, which, he felt no doubt, would be delighted to accept it.

Two points more :

First, Starter junior was a bachelor. A bachelor he would remain. "That absurd mistake, but too often committed by people between the ages of twenty and thirty, *he* was not the man to perpetrate at sixty"—such were the very words of the letter. Nothing, therefore, could happen to prevent the fulfillment of his intentions. His fortune would inevitably fall into the hands of the Branicans, as sure as the Mississippi falls into the Gulf of Mexico.

Second, Starter junior would use every effort—would make superhuman efforts—to keep the property from his niece as long as possible. He would endeavor to live to be a hundred years old, nor should she blame him for this natural desire on his part to put off his demise to the furthest possible date.

Lastly, he begged Mrs. Branican—he even ordered her—not to answer him. In truth there hardly existed any means of communication between the towns and the forest settlements in the midst of which he lived. As to himself, she would never hear from him again until she got the document announcing his death, and that of course would not be penned by himself.

Such was the extraordinary letter Mrs. Branican received. That she was to be the sole heiress of her uncle's property,

there was no doubt. One day she would become possessed of those $500,000, and probably more, thanks to the labors of this 'cute settler. But, as Mr. Starter had strongly expressed his intention to overreach his centenary,—and Heaven knows if North Americans are determined people,—John Branican had been a wise man not to give up his sailor life. With his intelligence and courage he would easily be able to make enough to live comfortably with his wife and child, long before Uncle Starter would consent to take his departure for the next world.

Such was the state of affairs of the young couple when the *Franklin* set sail for the West. And now, all this having been detailed for the better understanding of the eventualities about to be narrated, it would not be amiss to call attention to the only relatives Dolly had at San Diego, to Mr. and Mrs. Burker.

Len Burker, an American by birth, then about thirty-one years old, had come to the capital of Lower California only a few years previously. This Yankee from New England was a man of cold exterior, hard-featured, muscular, resolute, full of activity, and at the same time extremely reticent, never allowing his face to betray the secrets of his thoughts and never talking of what he was doing. There are natures that are not unlike a house whose shutters are tightly closed, and the doors of which are never opened to anyone. His was one of them. And yet there was no unpleasant gossip going around at San Diego about this uncommunicative man, who, by his marriage with Jane Burker, had become John Branican's cousin. So, it was quite natural that the latter should leave Dolly and the child under their care, seeing he had no other relatives but them. In truth it was more especially under Jane's care he left them, knowing as he did the affection the two cousins had for each other.

It would have been very different if John had known the

true character of Len Burker; if he had been aware of the cunning that lay behind the impenetrable mask he wore; of the utter disregard he felt for social conventionalities, the respect of self and the rights of other people. Deceived by his rather seductive appearance, and by the fascinating kind of spell he held over her, Jane had married him five years before in Boston, where she was living with her mother. The latter died shortly after the celebration of this marriage, which was to prove such an unhappy one; and Jane's dowry, with the money left by the deceased, would have been quite sufficient for the newly married pair to live on, if Len Burker had been the man to follow the straight road, and not the crooked paths of life; but he was not. After having devoured a portion of his wife's fortune Len Burker, whose commercial credit had suffered considerably in Boston, resolved to leave that town. Away, at the other end of America, in a new land, where his "shady" reputation would not follow him, he might find opportunities which were no longer forthcoming in New England.

Jane, who now knew her husband, eagerly acceded to this change, glad to get away from Boston, where Len Burker's position gave rise to unfavorable comments; happy also to be going near the only relation that remained to her. And they accordingly came to live at San Diego, where Dolly and Jane met again.

As a matter of fact, during the three years they had already been there, Len Burker had so effectually concealed the dishonesty of his transactions that nobody entertained any suspicions about him.

Thus it was that the two cousins had renewed acquaintance at the time when Dolly had not yet become Mrs. Branican.

The young wife and the young girl grew very much attached to each other. And although it was Jane who ought to have led Dolly, the reverse was the case. Dolly was

strong, whereas Jane was weak; and soon the maiden became the young wife's support. When Dolly's engagement to John Branican was announced, Jane was delighted —a very different kind of marriage from hers, this one promised to be! And what sympathy she might have found in the new couple, had she mustered up sufficient courage to reveal to them the secret of her troubles! But, a very slave to her husband, she never had dared to do so.

In the meantime, Len Burker's position became more and more alarming. The little that was left of his wife's fortune when he left Boston was nearly all squandered. This spendthrift, or rather this impassioned speculator, was one of those who trust everything to chance and expect everything from chance alone. Such a spirit, unamenable to the counsels of reason, could not but lead him, and was actually leading him, to a disastrous end.

On his coming to San Diego, Len Burker opened an office in Fleet Street—one of those offices that smell of the thieves' den, where any idea, good or bad, may be the starting point of a scheme. An adept at holding up the glittering phases of a scheme, free from any scruple as to the means he employed, clever at transforming specious quibbles into arguments, and rather inclined to look upon the property of other people as his own, he had very soon rushed into twenty different speculations, all of which became so many successive wrecks, and in all of which he suffered proportionately. At the time this story begins, Len Burker was reduced to "shifting" expedients, and the hardships of straitened circumstances had been felt in his household. However, as he had kept the knowledge of his transactions to himself, he could still command a certain credit, which he used in making fresh dupes by setting up new speculations.

Nevertheless this state of affairs could but end fatally. It would not be long ere complaints would be made. Perhaps, this adventurous Yankee, who had emigrated West, would

now have no other course but to quit San Diego, even as he had quitted Boston. And yet, in this town, the center of such intellectual and commercial activity, whose improvements grew from year to year, an honest and intelligent man would have found a hundred opportunities of getting rich. But he should possess what Len Burker had not : upright sentiments, accurate judgment, what might be styled the probity of human intelligence.

One thing we must insist upon : neither John Branican nor William Andrew, nor anybody in fact, had the least idea of the nature of Len Burker's affairs. In the industrial and commercial world no one knew that this adventurer—would to Heaven he deserved no worse name!—was on the road to ruin. And even when the crisis should come, people might perhaps look upon him merely as an unlucky man, and not as one of those unprincipled beings ready to use any means for the purpose of obtaining money. So, although feeling no very deep sympathy for him, John Branican had never conceived any suspicion on his behalf. It was then with a feeling of perfect security that he relied on the Burkers to look after his wife during his absence. If anything was ever to happen which would oblige Dolly to have recourse to them, her appeal would not be vain. Their house was open to her, and she would find in it the welcome due, not only to a friend, but to a sister.

In this respect, indeed, Jane Burker's feelings could not be placed in doubt. The affection she showed for her cousin was as boundless as it was disinterested. Far from finding fault with the sincere friendship which bound these two young women together, Len Burker had, on the contrary, encouraged it, doubtless with an eye to the future and to the advantages that their intimacy might procure him. He knew, moreover, that Jane would never say anything that she ought not to say, that she would keep a discreet silence about his own affairs, about what she needs

must know of the unlawful schemes in which he was engaged, and about the difficulties against which she had begun to battle in her household. On these several topics Jane would be silent; not even a word of complaint would escape her lips. To say it once more, completely mastered by her husband, she submitted absolutely to his will, although she knew him to be a man without conscience, who had lost every shred of moral sense, and capable of committing the most unpardonable deeds. And after so many deceptions how could she have retained the slightest esteem for him? But—and too much stress could not be laid on this most essential point—she dreaded him; she was as a very child in his hands, and at a beck from him she would once again follow him, if, for safety sake, he was compelled to run away to any part of the globe. Lastly, were it only out of self-respect, she would not have let others see the misery she was enduring, not even her cousin Dolly, who suspected them perhaps, despite her reticence.

Now, the position of John and Dolly Branican on one side, and that of Len and Jane Burker on the other, are sufficiently well established for the reader. To what extent these positions were to be modified by the unexpected events about to happen, so quickly and so suddenly, no one could possibly have foreseen.

CHAPTER III.

PROSPECT HOUSE.

THIRTY years ago Lower California—about a third of the State of California—had only 35,000 inhabitants; 150,000 is now the figure of its population. At the time of our story the territories of this province, on the utmost bounds of Western America, were absolutely waste, and seemed fit for nothing but the rearing of cattle. Who

could have guessed what a future was in store for so forlorn a spot, when the only means of communication by land were a few tracks made by wagon wheels, and by sea one single line of vessels engaged in the coasting trade.

And yet as early as the year 1769, there had been a nucleus of a town a few miles inland, north of the Bay of San Diego. Thus it is that the present town can claim, in the history of the country, the honor of having been the earliest settlement in the Californian district.

When the new continent—bound to old Europe by mere colonial ties, which the United Kingdom obstinately persisted in holding too tight—rose up in its might to assert its rights, these bonds were severed. The Union of the States of North America sprang up under the flag of independence. England lost all but the débris of her former colonies, the Dominion of Canada and Columbia, whose return to the Union may be looked upon as a certainty at no distant date. As to the separation movement, it had spread over the central populations who now had but one thought: breaking their fetters, whatever they might be.

California was not at that time under the Anglo-Saxon yoke. It belonged to the Mexicans, and remained so until 1846. In that year, after setting itself free, the township of San Diego, created eleven years before, became what it ought to have always been—American.

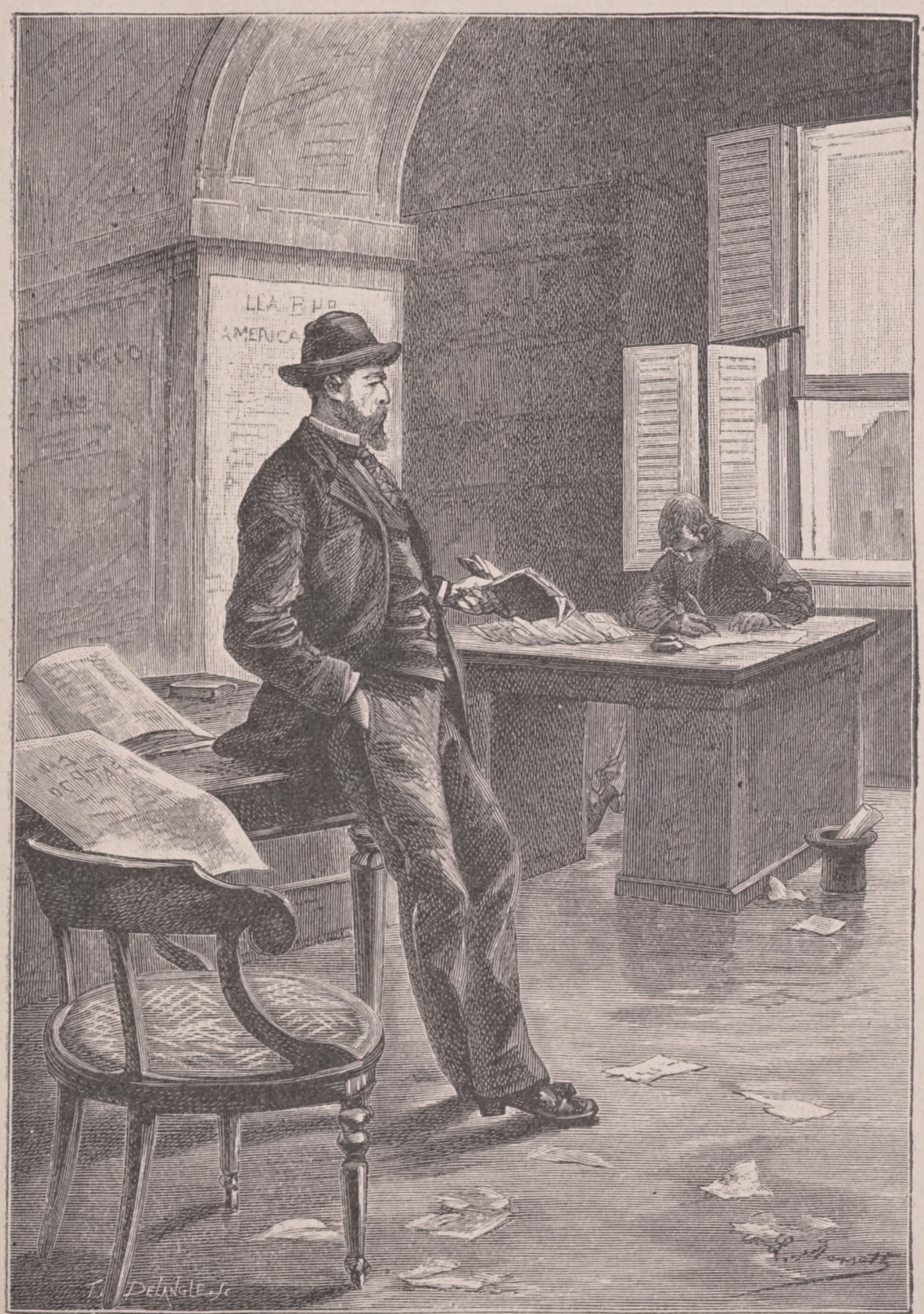
The Bay of San Diego is magnificent. It has been compared to the Bay of Naples, but its comparison would perhaps be more exact with the Bay of Vigo or that of Rio de Janeiro. Being twelve miles long and two miles wide, it affords anchorage for a trading fleet as well as maneuvering room for a whole naval squadron, for it is also considered a military port. Somewhat oval shaped, with a narrow entrance toward the west, between Island Point and Loma or Coronado Point, the bay is sheltered on all

sides. The winds from the high sea do not reach it ; the swell from the Pacific Ocean hardly disturbs its surface ; vessels get out of it without difficulty, and ride in it at an average minimum depth of twenty-three feet. It is the only safe and practicable port of call on the west coast south of San Francisco and north of San Quentin.

With so many natural advantages it was evident the old boundaries of the town would soon prove too narrow. Already it had been necessary to erect military huts on a neighboring tract of brushwood land, for the accommodation of a detachment of cavalry. Thanks to the initiative of Mr. Horton, and his excellent plans, a town-annex quickly grew on this spot, and nowadays this annex has become the city and stretches out on the ridge north of the bay. The enlargement took place with that speed so familiar to American towns. A million dollars, sown on the land, produced a crop of private houses, public buildings, offices, and villas. In 1885 San Diego had already 15,000 inhabitants—to-day it has 35,000. Its first railroad dates from 1881. Now, the Atlantic and Pacific Road, the Southern California Road, the Southern Pacific Road all put it in communication with the interior, even as the Pacific Coast Steamship Company connects it with San Francisco.

A pretty and comfortable town it is, with good air, in good sanitary conditions, and with a climate now too well known to need any praise. In the environs the country is of unparalleled fertility. Vines, olive trees, orange and lemon trees grow side by side with the trees, fruits, and vegetables of the North.

As to the town itself, it is built with that picturesque comfort, that freedom of architecture, and that display of individual taste which is so conducive to health, when it is not checked by the scarcity of the land to be built upon. There are parks, squares, wide streets, trees scattered here and there ; in other words there is health in direct proportion



ONE OF THOSE OFFICES THAT SMELL OF THE THIEVES' DEN (*p.* 20).

to the amount of air so plentifully given to this fortunate population.

And then, if progress in all its forms was not found in a modern city, especially when that city is American, where would it be looked for? Gas, the telegraph, the telephone, are there; the inhabitants have but to hold up a finger to be at once supplied with light, to be enabled to send their telegrams, or carry on conversation from one part of the city to the other. You see tall poles, 50 feet high, throw electric light down on the streets of the town. If they have not yet devised a General Milk Company to distribute milk through underground pipes to every house, if those movable sidewalks that are to travel at the rate of twelve miles an hour are not in working order at San Diego yet, these things will undoubtedly come to pass after a certain time.

To these advantages let us add those various institutions in which is exhibited the vitality of all great agglomerations, a Custom House whose transactions increase day by day, two banks, a Chamber of Commerce, an Emigration Bureau, vast and numerous exchanges, where enormous quantities of wood and flour are bought and sold; churches of all denominations, three markets, a theater, a gymnasium, three large schools, a County Court House, Masonic and Odd Fellows' homes for poor children,—in fine, a number of establishments in which students are prepared for university honors,—and then we may foresee what the future has in store for this youthful city, so jealous of her moral and material interests and surrounded by so many elements of prosperity. Does it need newspapers? No! It possesses three dailies, the *Herald* among others, and each of these papers publishes a weekly edition. Are tourists in danger of not finding comfortable lodging? Why, not to speak of the lower class of hotels, have they not at their disposal three magnificent buildings, Horton House, Florence Hotel, and Gerard Hotel, with its hundred rooms; and, on the

opposite shore of the bay, overlooking the sands of Coronado Point, on an admirable site, in the middle of charming villas, another new hotel, the cost of which has not been less than five million dollars.

From all countries in the Old World, as from all points of the New, let not tourists hesitate to visit this young and lively capital of Lower California; they will be hospitably welcomed by its generous inhabitants, and they will not regret their trip, save perhaps that they may think it too short.

San Diego is a town full of activity, and yet very orderly, like most American cities, in the whirl of its commerce. If life be expressed by activity, then life is indeed found here in the fullest acceptation of the word. Time is scarcely sufficient for the transaction of business. But if such be the case for people whose nature and habits hurl them into this whirlwind, it is no longer true of those whose life is an endless series of unemployed hours. When activity ceases, time drags on but too slowly!

This is what Mrs. Branican experienced after the departure of the *Franklin.* Since her marriage she had been mixed up with her husband's work. Even when he would not be on sea, his position of trust with the Andrew firm kept him ever engaged. Over and above the share he took in the commerical transactions, he had to superintend the building of the three-master that he would eventually command. With what zeal, with what love almost, he watched its smallest details. He lavished upon it that incessant care of a man superintending the building of the house in which he is to spend all his life. His watchfulness was greater even, for a ship is not a house only, or the means of acquiring money, it is the structure of wood and iron to which the lives of so many men are about being intrusted. Is it not, besides, as though a fragment of one's native land, which goes away from it to return to it again, and, which is

not always fated, alas, to come back to the port where it was born.

Dolly very often went to the dockyard with Captain John. These timbers rising day by day on the inclined keel, those ribs suggestive of the skeleton of some gigantic sea monster, those planks fitting into each other one by one, that hull with its complex shape, that deck cut here and there by wide hatchways for the shipping of the cargo, those masts lying on the ground until they should be set up in their places, the interior arrangements, the crew's quarters, the poop and its cabins—were not all these of interest to her? It was John's life, and that of his companions, that the *Franklin* would have to defend against the billows of the Pacific. And hence there was not a plank which was not associated in her own mind with some special duty in view of their safety; not a blow of a hammer, amid the noise of the shipyard, but re-echoed in her heart. John initiated her to all this labor, told her the use of every log of wood or block of metal, and showed her the progress of the general construction. She did love this vessel, of which John was about to be the very soul, the master next to God! And at times she would ask herself why she did not go with John, why he did not take her away with him, why she should not share the dangers of his cruise, why she should not be with him on that deck when he would return to the port of San Diego? Yes, she would fain have remained by her husband's side. And in truth has it not entered, long since, into the habit of seafaring people in the North, both of the Old as of the New world, to bring their families about with them for years on the ocean wave?

But there was the little baby, Wat! Could Dolly leave him to a nurse's charge, far from a mother's care? No! Nor could she bring him to sea with her and expose him to the hardships of a voyage so dangerous for a frail little

being. She should then of necessity remain at San Diego, with this child, so as to look after the life that had just been given him, not leaving him a moment, surrounding him with care and affection, so that his father on his return might find him the picture of health and happiness. And then again John would be away but six months; for, after reloading at Calcutta, the *Franklin* would immediately sail for home again. And, besides, was it not her duty, as a sailor's wife, to accustom herself to these obligatory partings, even though her heart never could grow reconciled to them?

Dolly should therefore resign herself to her position, and she did so. But after John's departure, as soon as the bustle that had been her very life ceased around her, how blank, weary, and monotonous existence would have seemed to her, had she not been absorbed in her child, had she not concentrated all her love on him!

John Branican's house occupied one of the farthest lots on the heights which incase the north side of the bay. It was a kind of Swiss cottage in the middle of a little garden planted with orange and olive trees and inclosed by a simple wooden railing. A ground floor, with a circular veranda, on which opened the doors and windows of the best room and the dining-room, a first floor with a balcony, the gable prettily ornamented with the fancy border round the edge of the roof—such was this tasteful but simple little home. Inside, on the ground floor, the best room and dining-room were modestly furnished; upstairs were Mrs. Branican's room and the nursery; while the wing at the back was devoted to the kitchen and the service of the house. Prospect House was exceptionally situated, thanks to its southern aspect. The view extended over the whole town and across the bay as far as the houses on Loma Point. It was of course somewhat distant from the center of the town;

DOLLY OFTEN WENT TO THE DOCKYARD WITH CAPTAIN JOHN (*p.* 27).

but this slight drawback was amply compensated for by its position in the fresh air and its exposure to the southerly breeze laden with the scented brine of the Pacific Ocean.

Here it was that Dolly was to spend her long hours of solitude. The child's nurse and one servant were all that were required for the work of the household. The only visitors that ever came were Mr. and Mrs. Burker—the former at rare intervals, the latter not so seldom. William Andrew, as he had promised, called frequently on the young woman, desirous of letting her know any information that might reach him directly, or otherwise, concerning the *Franklin.* Long before letters can get to their destination, the maritime newspapers publish an account of the vessels that have been spoken with, the ports they call at, and any shipping items that may be of interest to the owners. Dolly would then be kept well acquainted with all the news. As to her intercourse with the outer world, accustomed as she had been to the home life of Prospect House, she had never sought for it. She thought but of one thing; and even though her cottage had been filled with visitors, it would have seemed empty to her since John was no longer there; and empty it would remain until he returned to it.

The first few days were very hard. Dolly did not leave the house. Jane Burker came to see her and they made themselves busy with little Wat and talked incessantly about Captain John. Most of the time that she was by herself, Dolly would spend part of the day out on the balcony. Her gaze would travel away across the bay, over Island Point, beyond the Coronado Islands. It would fain cross the watery line that bound yonder horizon. The *Franklin* was already far away from it. But she overtook the ship in thought, she walked the deck of the vessel side by side with her husband, and whenever a craft returning from distant seas was perceived from afar making all sail for port she would say to herself that one day the *Franklin*, too,

would appear in the offing, and little by little would enlarge in her sight as it neared the shore, and that John would be on board.

Meanwhile, little Wat's health would soon have suffered from this close confinement in Prospect House. During the second week following the departure of the schooner the weather had become delightful and the breeze cooled the increasing heat. So Mrs. Branican made it her duty to go for little outings with the child and its nurse. When the excursion was confined to the environs of San Diego, they would walk as far as the houses of Old Town, the primitive nucleus of the city. How the rosy-cheeked baby seemed to thrive in the open air, and how sweetly, whenever the nurse would stand still, he would smile at his mother and clap his little hands with delight. On one or two occasions when longer trips were planned, a little carriage, hired in the neighborhood, would bring the three away, or even the four, for Mrs. Burker would join the party. One day they went thus to a hill, scattered over with villas, known as Knob Hill. It overlooks Florence Hotel and the view therefrom extends as far out as the islands in the west. Another day they directed their course toward Coronado Beach, against which the sea dashes with the roar of thunder. Then the Mussel Beds were visited where the high tide covers the magnificent cliffs with its spray. Dolly could not refrain from putting her foot in contact with those ocean waves that seemed as though they brought her the echo of the far distant seas where John was then sailing—that same ocean which was perhaps even then belaboring the sides of the *Franklin* some thousands of miles away. She stood there, silently, fancying she could see the young captain's vessel before her, and murmuring the while the name—John !

About ten o'clock in the morning, on the 30th of March, Mrs. Branican was on the balcony, when she perceived

How the rosy-cheeked Baby seemed to thrive in the open Air (*p.* 30).

Mrs. Burker coming toward Prospect House. She was walking fast, waving her hand in token of some evidently joyful intelligence. Dolly ran down and was at the door at the same time as her cousin.

"What is it, Jane?" she asked.

"Dolly, dear," replied Mrs. Burker, "you are going to hear something that will make you happy. Mr. Andrew desires me to tell you that the *Boundary*, which came into port this morning, met the *Franklin*."

"The *Franklin?*"

"Yes! Mr. Andrew had just heard about it when he met me in Fleet Street, and as he would not be able to come here till this afternoon, I came along instead of him, not to keep you waiting."

"And they heard from John?"

"Yes, Dolly."

"What did they hear? Do tell me!"

"About a week ago the *Franklin* and the *Boundary* passed each other within hailing distance."

"Everything was all right on board?"

"Yes, all right. The two captains were near enough to be able to speak with each other, and the last word they could hear on board the *Boundary*, was your name!"

"My poor John!" cried Mrs. Branican, her eyes filling with tears.

"I am so glad, Dolly," continued Mrs. Burker, "to have been the first to bring you this piece of news!"

"And I am so thankful to you for it," replied Mrs. Branican. "If you only knew how happy it has made me! Ah, if I could hear every day! John—my dear John! The captain of the *Boundary* saw him—John spoke to him. It is like one more farewell he has sent me!"

"Of course, Dolly; and, let me tell you again, all was well on board the *Franklin*."

"Jane, I must see the captain of the *Boundary* myself.

He will be able to give me all the details. Where did they meet?"

"That I don't know, but the ship's log-book will soon tell us, and the captain of the *Boundary* will give you all the information you want."

"Very well, Jane, it will take me but a few minutes to dress, and we will go together—immediately."

"No—not to-day, Dolly. We would not be allowed on board to-day."

"Why not?"

"Because the vessel only arrived this morning, and is at present in quarantine."

"For how long?"

"Oh, only about twenty-four hours. It is simply a matter of formality; but, for all that, nobody can——"

"Then how did Mr. Andrew hear the news?"

"The Custom House people brought him a message from the captain. Calm yourself, Dolly dear. There can be no doubt about what I have just told you, and you will have the proof of what I say to-morrow. I only ask you to be patient for one short day."

"Well, then, we'll wait till to-morrow," said Mrs. Branican. "I will call for you about nine o'clock in the morning. You will come on board the *Boundary* with me, won't you?"

"With pleasure, Dolly. I will be ready in the morning, and as the boat will be out of quarantine, we will be able to see the captain."

"Is he not a Captain Ellis, a friend of John's?"

"The very man, Dolly; the *Boundary* belongs to the Andrews, you know."

"Well, that is all settled, Jane. I will be at your house at the time I mentioned. How endless this day is going to seem to me! You will stop and have dinner with me?"

"If you would like me to, Dolly. Burker will not be

FROM HER BALCONY SHE PERCEIVED MRS. BURKER (*p.* 31).

home before evening, and we could spend the afternoon together."

"Quite so; and we will talk about John, about him all the time."

"Well, and little Wat? How is our baby getting on?" inquired Mrs. Burker.

"He is very well," replied the mother. "As happy as a bird! How pleased his father will be to see him again! Jane, suppose we took him and the nurse along with us to-morrow? You know I cannot bear to be away from him even for a few hours. I would not be easy if I lost sight of him—if I had not him with me!"

"Why not, Dolly? That is a good idea! It will do him good. The weather is fine, the bay smooth as a lake. Why, it will be the little pet's first sea trip! That, too, is settled."

Jane remained at Prospect House till five in the evening. And as she was leaving her cousin, she again repeated that she would be waiting for her at nine o'clock on the morrow to go on board the *Boundary*.

CHAPTER IV.

ON BOARD THE "BOUNDARY."

THE next day everybody was up early at Prospect House. The weather was beautiful. A land breeze swept out to sea the last lingering mist of the night. The nurse attended to little Wat while Mrs. Branican was dressing. It had been arranged that she was to dine with Mrs. Burker. So a light breakfast was partaken of, sufficient for the forenoon, for her call on Captain Ellis would very probably last a couple of hours at least. It would be so delightful to hear every word the captain would say!

Mrs. Branican, with the nurse and the child, left the

house as the clocks of San Diego struck half-past eight. The wide streets of the upper part of the town, bordered with villas standing on their own ground, were soon passed, and then Dolly turned down the narrow crowded streets which constitute the busy portion of the town. Len Burker lived in Fleet Street, not far from the wharf of the Pacific Coast Steamship Company. On the whole, it was a pretty long walk, right across town, and it was nine o'clock before they reached their destination.

The house had a quiet aspect, a sad appearance even, with its shutters closed, most part of the time. As Len Burker only received business visitors, he had no intercourse with his neighbors. He was but little known even in Fleet Street, and his affairs often necessitated his being away from morning till night. Frequently, too, he went on long journeys, generally to San Francisco, for certain transactions about which he never spoke to his wife. That morning he was not at the office when Mrs. Branican arrived. Jane said that he was sorry he would not be able to accompany them on board the *Boundary* but he would not fail to be home for dinner.

"I am ready, my dear Dolly," said she, after kissing the child; "but won't you sit down a moment?"

"I am not tired in the least."

"And you would not take anything before starting?"

"No, thank you, Jane! I am so impatient to be with Captain Ellis. I pray you, let us go at once!"

Mrs. Burker had only one old servant, a colored woman that her husband had brought from New York with him when he came to live at San Diego. Her name was Nô; she had been Len Burker's own nurse; and, having always lived with his parents, she was devoted to him and spoke to him with the same familiarity as she did when he was a boy. This coarse and imperious creature was the only one who had any influence over Burker, and he gave her com-

plete control of his house. How often Jane had been stung by her servant's domineering ways and utter want of respect, all of which met with her husband's approval! But she submitted to this slavery even as she did to her husband's dominion. With a resignation, which was but weakness, she let things take their course, and Nô never even asked her advice about household matters.

As Jane was going out, the woman told her not to fail to be home before noon as Len Burker would be back for dinner, and that he was on no account to be kept waiting. Besides, he had something very particular to say to Mrs. Branican—so Nô said.

"What is it about?" Dolly inquired of her cousin.

"How could I know? Come away, Dolly; come."

And the whole of the little party left the house on their way toward the quays, which they reached a few minutes later.

The *Boundary* had just cleared quarantine but was not yet at her moorings alongside Andrew's wharf. She was anchored out in the bay, about a cable's length on the inside of Loma Point. Not for another two hours would the ship weigh anchor; visitors had then to cross the bay in order to get on board, a trip of about a couple of miles, made twice every hour by little steamboats used for that very purpose.

As soon as they arrived Dolly and Jane took their places on the steam launch along with a dozen other passengers. Most of them were friends or relations of the incoming crew, eager to get aboard as soon as the regulations would permit. The launch cast its moorings, and, getting clear of the landing stage, made its way obliquely across the bay, panting like a living thing with every puff of its engine.

Basking in the light of a cloudless sky, the bay could be seen in its full extent, with the amphitheater of the houses of San Diego, the hill towering above the old town, the pass between Island and Loma Points, the immense Coronado

Hotel with its fine architecture, and the lighthouse which in the night time flashes its beams so far out at sea.

There were a few vessels anchored here and there, that the steam launch had to steer clear of, at the same time looking out for boats coming in the opposite direction or again for the fishing smacks that were hugging the wind.

Mrs. Branican was sitting next to Jane on one of the aft seats. Near her was the nurse with the baby in her arms. The child was not asleep ; his eyes were as though bathed in that flood of light to which the breeze seemed to impart life with its breath; and he would emerge from his apparent slumber whenever a seagull would utter its sharp cry as it flew over the boat. His mother was watching him with loving eyes as he lay there, the picture of infant health and bliss, stooping every now and then to kiss him.

But Dolly's attention was soon drawn away from him by the sight of the *Boundary*.

No longer obstructed by the other vessels, the three-master could now be plainly seen at the end of the bay, flying its flags against the sunlit sky. It was swinging to the tide, its bows turned toward the west, the last waves of the tide breaking against its taut hawser.

Dolly's whole soul was concentrated in the glance of her eye. She was thinking of John, far away on the very sistership of this one, both owned by the same firm, both belonging to the same port, both constructed in the same shipyard.

And losing herself in the charm of her illusion, her "wish father to her thought," Dolly yielded to the pleasurable fancy that John was there on the deck ; that he was waiting for her—that he held out his hand on seeing her—that she would be in his arms in a moment. His name came to her lips. She called him, and her own name uttered by him fell on her entranced ear.

Then a little cry from her child called her back to reality.

It was the *Boundary* she was going to, not the *Franklin* far away, thousands of leagues from the American coast.

"The *Franklin* will be here some day, in this very same place!" she whispered to Mrs. Burker.

"Certainly, Dolly dear," replied Jane; "and John will be aboard to greet us."

And though there was confidence on her lips as she spoke, her heart sank under the weight of a vague feeling of apprehension for the future.

It took the steam launch a quarter of an hour to cover the two miles separating San Diego from Loma Point, where our friends and the rest of the passengers landed. They now had to make their way to the *Boundary*, which was about a cable's length from the shore.

It chanced just then that a boat, under the guard of two sailors belonging to the three-master, lay close to the landing-stage. Mrs. Branican gave her name and the men at once offered to bring her across to the ship.

A few strokes of the oars were enough to bring them alongside, and Captain Ellis, having recognized his visitor, came to the side while she was going up the ladder followed by Jane and the nurse with her precious burden. The captain brought them on the poop, while the first mate began making preparations to bring the *Boundary* to her dock at San Diego.

"Mr. Ellis," began Mrs. Branican, "I was told that you met the *Franklin*."

"Yes, madam," replied the captain, "and I can tell you she was getting on A1, as I have already told Mr. Andrew."

"You saw John?"

"Our two ships passed so close to each other that Captain Branican and myself were able to exchange a few words."

"So you saw him!" she repeated, as though, while talk-

ing to herself, she endeavored to see in the captain's eye a reflection of the *Franklin.*

Mrs. Burker then asked a few questions to which Dolly listened attentively, although her eyes were turned toward the horizon beyond the entrance to the bay.

"On that day the weather was very favorable," said the captain, "and the *Franklin* was running with all her sails. Captain John was abaft, with his telescope in his hand. He had luffed a quarter so as to get near me, for I had not been able to alter my course, sailing as close as I could and hugging the wind so hard that I ran the risk of shivering my sails."

Mrs. Branican hardly understood the exact meaning of the seaman's expressions. But what she did know was that the man now speaking in her hearing had seen John and that he had been able to speak with him.

"When we came abreast," he added, "your husband, Mrs. Branican, waved his hand to me shouting, 'All's well, Ellis! As soon as you get to San Diego, send word to my wife—to my darling Dolly!' Then the two vessels passed on and a few minutes later were far away from each other."

"And what day did you meet the *Franklin?*"

"The 23d of March, at twenty-five minutes past eleven in the morning!"

More details were asked, and the captain had to show on the map the exact spot where the meeting had taken place. It was in longitude 148° and latitude 20° that the *Boundary* had spoken to the *Franklin*, that is, at about 1700 miles from San Diego. If the weather continued favorable,—and there was every chance of its doing so, seeing they were in the fine season,—Captain John would make a pleasant and quick passage across the North Pacific seas. And again, as he would find a cargo waiting for him at Calcutta, his stay in the Indian capital would be of short duration, after which he would immediately return to America. His absence

would therefore not exceed five or six months, as his employers had already calculated.

While Captain Ellis was answering, now the questions of Mrs. Burker, then those of Mrs. Branican, the latter, still carried away by her imagination, fancied she was on board the *Franklin!* It was not Ellis, it was John who was telling her all this. It was his voice she thought she heard.

Just then the mate came astern to tell the captain that all was nearly ready. The sailors on the forecastle were waiting but for the word to set the vessel free.

Captain Ellis then offered to get his visitor rowed back to land unless she preferred to stay on board. In the latter case she could cross the bay on the *Boundary* and land at the firm's wharf. It would be a trip of about two hours.

Mrs. Branican would have been very pleased to accept the captain's offer, but she had to be back for dinner at twelve—the hour appointed by Len Burker. She knew that after what the colored servant had told her, Jane would like to be home in time. So she asked Captain Ellis to be kind enough to get them brought back to the shore so as not to miss the next home-bound steam launch.

The necessary orders were given in consequence. The visitors took leave of the captain, after the latter had kissed little Wat's chubby cheeks. Then going down in front of the nurse they took their seats in the little boat and a few minutes later reached the landing-stage.

While waiting the arrival of the steam launch, that had just left the pier at San Diego, Mrs. Branican watched the movements of the *Boundary*. Inspired by the rude song of the boatswain, the sailors were weighing anchor, while the mate was getting the main jib, foremast, and brigantine sails set. Under this canvas the three-master would easily make her way to the dock with the tide.

Soon the steamer came alongside the pier. A few blows of the whistle were given to hurry up the passengers, and

two or three straggling late-comers were seen coming quickly up the rock in front of the Coronado Hotel.

The steam launch was to stop but five minutes. Mrs. Branican, Jane Burker, and the nurse came on board and took their seats on a starboard bench, while the other passengers—about twenty in all—kept pacing up and down the deck. One more steam whistle, the engine was set in motion, and the boat soon got away from the coast.

It was only half-past eleven. Mrs. Branican would therefore have plenty of time to get to Fleet Street, seeing that it only took them a quarter of an hour to cross the bay. As the boat got farther and farther away she still had her eyes riveted on the *Boundary*. The anchor weighed, the sails filled with the breeze and the vessel began to glide on her way. When she would be moored to the wharf at San Diego, Dolly could go and visit Captain Ellis as often as she wished.

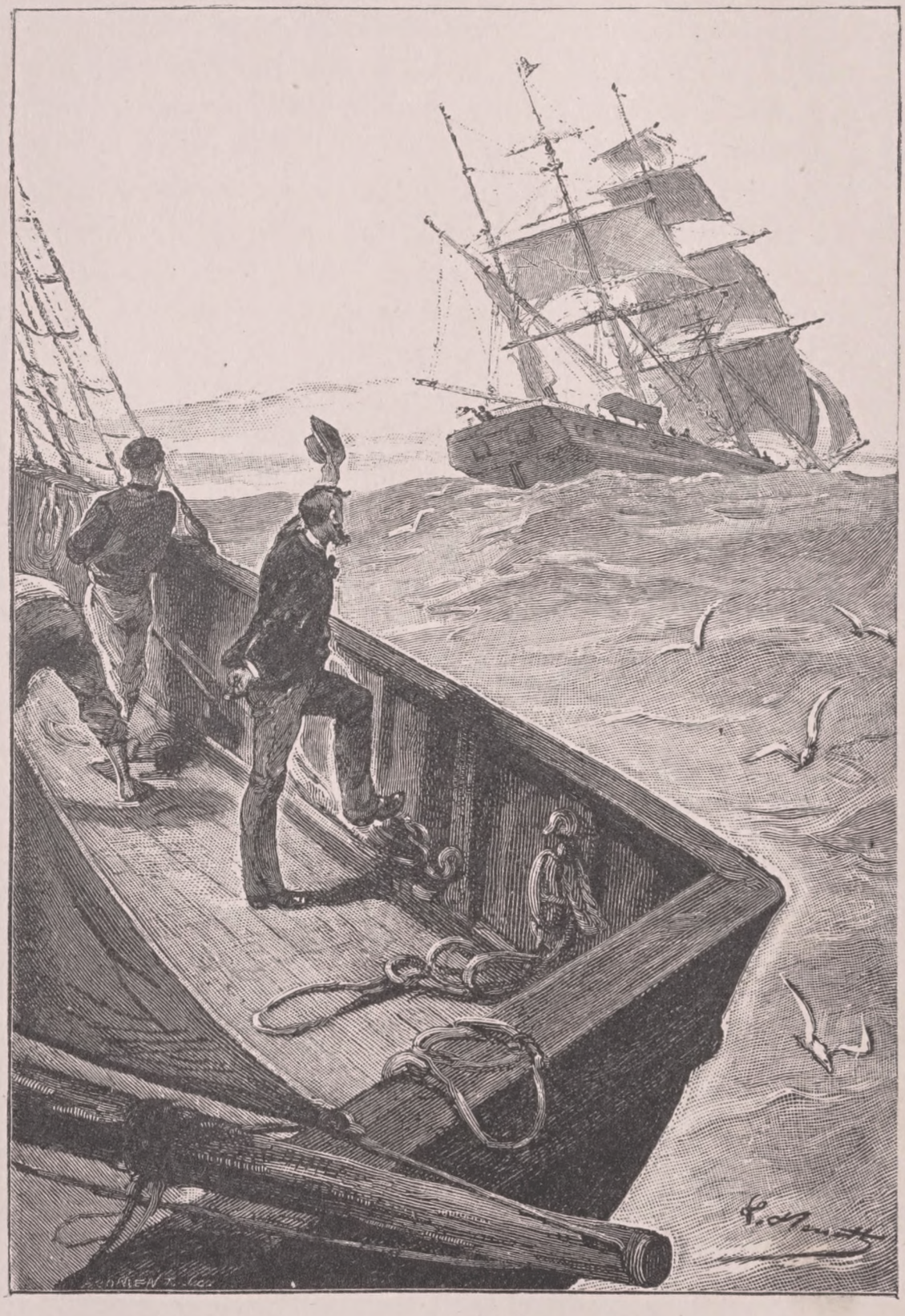
On sped the steam launch. The houses of the town began to look larger and larger on the picturesque amphitheater of which they formed the different galleries. It was but a quarter of a mile more ere they would reach the pier.

"Look ahead, there!" shouted, just then, one of the sailors, who was in the bows.

And he turned to the man at the wheel, who was standing on a little bridge in front of the funnel.

On hearing the cry, Mrs. Branican looked toward the port, where a little maneuvering was going on which had also attracted the attention of the other passengers, most of whom now crowded about the forepart of the launch.

A large brig-schooner, that had got clear of the vessels moored along the quays, was just preparing to leave the bay, her stem turned toward Island Point. She was helped in this movement by a tug which was to bring her out of the bay and they had already got up a certain speed.



THEN THE TWO VESSELS PASSED ON (*p.* 38).

Just then the schooner was right across the course of the steam launch, and so near was she, that in order to avoid a collision the latter would have to veer around her. This is what had made the sailor warn the man at the helm.

A certain uneasiness seized the passengers—a feeling all the more natural as the port was quite encumbered with ships at anchor here and there. And with an instinctive movement all of them made a rush for the rear portion of the boat.

The course to be pursued was self-evident : the launch should stand still and make room for the tug and the schooner, and should not resume her journey until they had passed. Some fishing smacks going with the wind rendered the steering still more difficult.

"Look out !" again cried the man on watch.

"Aye, aye !" answered the other. "No fear ! I've plenty of room !"

But hindered by the sudden appearance of a large incoming ocean steamer, the tug made a movement that no one expected, and came right back to larboard.

Shouts were immediately raised, to which were added the cries of the schooner's crew who were trying to help the tug by steering in the same direction as it was.

There was hardly a distance of twenty feet, now, between the tug and the steam launch.

Jane, very much frightened, had stood up. Mrs. Branican, with a mother's instinct, had taken little Wat from his nurse's arms and held him pressed to her bosom.

"Starboard ! To the starboard, there !" quickly called the captain of the tug to the man steering the launch, showing him, with his outstretched arm, the direction he wished him to take.

The man had not lost his presence of mind ; and he gave the tiller a mighty swing around, so as to get clear of the

tug, for the latter could not slacken speed for a moment as the schooner had already gained upon it and would inevitably have run it down.

Obeying the sharp turn of her helm, the launch pitched heavily to starboard, and, as frequently happens in such circumstances, the passengers lost their equilibrium and were all thrown to this same side.

More cries, this time cries of terror; for it seemed but too probable the boat would capsize with this overweight on her starboard.

At this moment, Mrs. Branican, who happened to be standing next the rail, lost her footing and was thrown overboard with her child.

The schooner was now sailing clear of the launch, and all danger of a collision was over.

"Dolly! Dolly!" exclaimed Jane, who was caught by one of the passengers as she was falling.

The next moment one of the sailors of the launch plunged in the direction where Mrs. Branican and the child had just disappeared.

Dolly, kept afloat by her garments, was drifting on the surface, with little Wat still in her arms, when the seaman reached her.

As the boat had been stopped immediately, it seemed it would prove an easy task for this strong swimmer to bring her back to safety.

But just as he was about to grasp her by the waist, the arms of the unhappy woman opened, as she struggled for breath, and the baby, slipping from her hold, sank under the waves.

By the time Mrs. Branican had been hoisted on deck, she was quite unconscious.

Again this plucky sailor—a man about thirty years of age, named Zach Fren—leaped overboard and dived several times, searching the waters all around. It was in vain,

"DOLLY! DOLLY!" EXCLAIMED JANE (*p.* 42).

The child had evidently been carried off by an undercurrent; he was nowhere to be seen.

Meanwhile the passengers were giving every care to the rescued mother. Jane and the nurse, bewildered with excitement, were making every effort to bring her back to life. The steam launch waited until Zach Fren would give up all hope of finding little Wat.

At last Dolly began to revive; she muttered Wat's name, her eyes opened, and her first cry was:

"My child!"

The sailor had just come up for the last time. Wat was not in his arms.

"My child!" again cried Dolly.

Then, springing to her feet, she pushed away the bystanders, ran aft of the deck, and made a desperate effort to throw herself into the sea.

Tender hands held her back, and with convulsed features, and crisped fingers, she fell motionless on the deck.

A few minutes later the boat reached her pier, and Mrs. Branican was carried to Jane's house. Len Burker, who had just returned home, sent off the servant for a doctor.

The doctor came almost immediately, and it was not without difficulty that Dolly recovered her senses.

Whereupon, with a fixed stare, she exclaimed:

"What is it? What has happened? Ah! I know."

Then with a laugh:

"It is my John! He is coming back! He is coming back to his wife and child! John! Here is my John!"

Mrs. Branican was demented.

CHAPTER V.

THREE MONTHS PASS BY.

HOW can we describe the effect produced on San Diego by this twofold catastrophe, the death of the child, the insanity of the mother! The reader knows the feeling of friendship shown the Branican family by the population; and the interest taken in the young captain of the *Franklin.* He had been gone hardly a fortnight and he was no longer a father, and his wife was insane. On his return to his empty home he would find neither little Wat's bright smiles, nor the tender greeting of Dolly, who would not even be able to recognize him! The day the *Franklin* would come into port, no popular demonstration would welcome her home.

But they would not wait until John Branican's return before acquainting him with the terrible misfortune that had befallen him. Mr. Andrew could not let him remain in ignorance of what had happened and run the risk of hearing the frightful news through some fortuitous channel. A telegram would be sent immediately to one of the agents of the firm at Singapore with orders to break the terrible truth to the captain even before he reached India.

Still, Mr. Andrew would fain delay the sending of this telegram for a while. Dolly might not be hopelessly mad, after all. The care and attentions lavished upon her might restore her to herself. Why needlessly deal her husband a double blow if there was a chance of her regaining her reason shortly.

After talking the matter over with Len and Jane Burker, Mr. Andrew decided to wait until the doctors would have given their decision on the state of Dolly's mind. Do not these cases of sudden loss of mental power give more hope of recovery than such as are due to a slow disorganization

LEN BURKER MAKES A SUGGESTION (*p.* 45).

of intellectual activity? They do, and it was better to wait a few days or even a few weeks.

In the meantime the town was in a state of consternation. The flow of anxious callers in Fleet Street was incessant. Now and again minute searches had been made in the bay to find the body of the child, but they had led to no result. Seemingly it had been washed away by the tide. The poor little babe would not even have a grave over which his mother might come and pray, if she ever recovered her reason.

In the first place the doctors were able to ascertain that Dolly's insanity had taken the form of a quiet melancholy. No fits of hysterics, none of those unconscious outbreaks of violence which make it necessary to place patients in close confinement. No necessity, therefore, to take precautions against those excesses which make the poor stricken ones dangerous to others or to themselves. Dolly was now, to all appearance, a body without a soul, possessed of a brain in which there remained no recollection of that horrible catastrophe. Her eyes were dry and her gaze lifeless. It seemed as though she saw nothing, heard nothing. She was no longer a part of the moral world. She lived a mere material life.

Such was Mrs. Branican's condition during the month that followed the accident. The question of placing her in an asylum where special care should be given her was thoroughly studied. Mr. Andrew was in favor of such a course, and it would have been adopted, had not Len Burker made a suggestion which somewhat modified this plan.

One day he came to Mr. Andrew and said:

"We are sure of it now, sir; Dolly's insanity is not of so dangerous a character as to necessitate her being shut up; and as she has no other relatives than ourselves, we would like to keep her with us. Dolly was very fond of my wife;

and perhaps Jane's tending would prove better for her than that of strangers. If, later on, she became troublesome, it would be time enough to act, and steps might be taken in consequence. What do you say, Mr. Andrew?"

The worthy shipowner did not answer without a little hesitation, for he felt no sympathy for this man, although he knew nothing of his then highly compromised situation and had no reason to doubt his sincerity. After all, the two women's mutual affection was genuine, and, since Mrs. Burker was her only relative, it was evidently better that Dolly should be under her care. The essential point was that the unfortunate sufferer should be constantly and lovingly receiving such tending as her state required.

"Since it is your wish to assume this task," replied Mr. Andrew, "I see no objection, sir; your wife's devoted attachment to Mrs. Branican is incontestable."

"And will never fail her!" added Burker.

But even this was said in that cold, practical, and unpleasant manner which he was unable to throw off.

"I quite approve the step you are taking," continued Mr. Andrew. "One single question, however: I am wondering whether your house in Fleet Street, in the center of the noisy traffic of the city, will be favorable to poor Dolly's recovery. It is quietness she wants, and plenty of air."

"Just so," replied Len; "that is why we would propose to bring her back to Prospect House and to live there with her. The cottage is familiar to her, and perhaps the sight of the objects to which she was accustomed might have a beneficial effect on her mind. There she would be free from unwelcome visitors; almost in the country, you might say. Jane would bring her to places she knew, and take her for the same walks as she used to have with her child. If John were here, would he not approve of my plan? And what would he say, when he comes back, if he found his wife in a madhouse, in the care of paid attendants? Mr.

Andrew, everything must be done to bring back a ray of light into our unfortunate relative's mind ! "

This reply was no doubt given in all sincerity. But how was it that this man's language always gave rise to mistrust? In any case, the suggestion, in the way he put it, was worth accepting ; and Mr. Andrew could but thank him for it, adding that Captain John would be deeply grateful to him.

On the 27th of April, Mrs. Branican was taken to Prospect House, where Jane and Len Burker installed themselves the same day. And this move received general approbation.

It is easy to see what motive Burker had in view. On the very day of the accident, it must be remembered, he wanted to see Dolly on important business. Now this " business " concerned a certain sum of money that he wished to borrow from her. But since then things had changed. It was probable that, being next of kin, he would be intrusted with the management of her affairs, as guardian ; and, as such, he would find available means, which, illegal though they should be, no doubt, would enable him to gain time. Jane had had a presentiment of this ; and happy as she was to be able to give herself up entirely to Dolly, she trembled at the thought of what her husband might do under cover of a philanthropic feeling.

A new life was then inaugurated at Prospect House. Dolly was settled in the room out of which she had gone to meet with the dreadful calamity. But she who now returned to it was not the happy mother that had left it ; it was a senseless being. That well-beloved cottage, the drawing-room adorned with the photographs of the absent owner, the garden where he and she had spent such happy days together, recalled nothing to her of times bygone. Jane occupied the room next to hers, and Len Burker took possession of John's old study on the ground floor.

From this time the mysterious speculator resumed his daily

avocations. Each day he went down to San Diego, to his office in Fleet Street, where he kept up his old business. But what was remarkable was that he never failed to come back to Prospect House at night and that he only made short trips out of town.

The negro woman had, of course, followed her master to his new home, where she would be what she had proved at all times and under every circumstance, a creature in whom he could put implicit trust. Wat's nurse had been sent away, although she would willingly have given her services to Mrs. Branican. As to the other servant, she was retained, at the cottage, for the present, to help Nô, who could not do all the housekeeping by herself.

Besides, no one could have given Dolly such affectionate and constant attention as did Jane. Her love for her had increased still more, were that possible, since the death of the child—a calamity of which she blamed herself for being the primary cause. If she had not come to Dolly with the news at Prospect House, if she had not suggested that ill-fated visit to the captain of the *Boundary*, the child would still be with its mother, consoling her during her long hours of solitude. But for her, Dolly would not now be insane !

Doubtless it suited Burker's plans that his cousin's friends should be pleased with the treatment she received at Jane's hands. Be it as it may, Mr. Andrew was compelled to acknowledge that the poor woman could not be under better care. During his visits he would carefully watch for any sign of improvement in Dolly's health, still hoping that his first dispatch to Captain John, either at Singapore or in India, would not bear the news of a double misfortune—his child dead, his wife—— Was it not as though she too were dead ! Still, no ! He could not believe that Dolly, in all the strength of her youth, with such high spirits, so energetic a temperament, could have become hopelessly in-

THE GARDEN WHERE JOHN AND SHE HAD SPENT SUCH HAPPY DAYS TOGETHER (*p.* 47).

sane! Was it not the case of a fire simply covered over with ashes? Might not a single spark set it alight again? Still, five weeks had gone by and no ray of light had brightened up her darkness; and in the presence of this calm, passive cessation of brain activity, uninterrupted by any physiological over-excitement, the doctors did not seem to entertain the slightest hope, nor was it long ere they ceased their calls altogether. Mr. Andrew, even, giving up all hope of recovery, came but rarely to Prospect House, so painful was it for him to see this unfortunate being so indifferent and at the same time so unconscious.

When, for some reason or another, Len Burker was obliged to be away for a day, the colored servant had orders to keep a close watch on Mrs. Branican. Without hindering Jane's attendance in any way, she never left her by herself, and faithfully reported to her master any change she might have noticed in their patient's behavior. She took special pains to turn away the few people who still came to make kindly inquiries at the châlet. It was against the doctor's orders, she would say. Absolute quiet was required. These disturbances might bring on some dangerous fit. Mrs. Burker herself seconded Nô's efforts in refusing admittance to strangers, and thus Dolly's seclusion was becoming greater every day.

"Poor Dolly," thought Jane, "if she got worse, if her insanity took a dangerous form, if she grew uncontrollable, they would take her away; lock her up in an asylum. I might never see her again, perhaps. Oh, no! God grant that she may be left with me! Who could show her more affection than I?"

During the third week in May, Jane thought of trying the effect of a little outing in the vicinity of the cottage, in the hope that it might benefit her dear invalid. Her husband made no objection save that Nô should accompany them. This seemed but prudent after all. The walk and

the fresh air might excite Dolly, might perhaps suggest to her the idea of running away, and Jane by herself would not have been able to prevent her. Almost anything might be apprehended from an insane woman—ideas of suicide even. They should not run the risk of another calamity.

And so it was that several times Mrs. Branican went out leaning on Jane's arm, allowing herself to be led like a passive being, going where she was brought, and taking no interest in anything around her.

At first, although no incident occurred during these walks, the servant was not slow to notice a slight change in Dolly. Her usual quietness gave place to a visible emotion which might have serious consequences. Several times the sight of the children she met brought on a nervous attack. Was it the remembrance of the little one she had lost that was dawning upon her? Did little Wat come back to her memory? Whatever the cause might be, and even though this were a favorable symptom, the results were, each time, of a somewhat alarming character.

One day, Mrs. Branican had been brought up to the top of Knob Hill. She was looking toward the horizon, but it seemed as if her mind was void of thought even as her glance was void of life.

Suddenly her face brightened, she started, and, her eyes gleaming with a singular light, she stretched her trembling hand in the direction of a bright spot glistening out at sea.

"There! There!" she cried.

It was a sail, clearly visible against the sky, its whiteness glowing under the rays of the sun.

"There! There!" she repeated.

And the strange tone of her voice, did not seem to be that of a human voice.

While Jane was anxiously watching her, Nô shook her head with a look of displeasure. Then, seizing Dolly by the arm, she asked her to come away.

The poor woman did not even hear her.

"Come home, dear ; come along," said Jane.

And she tried to draw her away to turn her eyes from the sail on the horizon.

Dolly did not move.

"No ! No !" she cried.

And she pushed away the negro servant with a strength of which she would not have been thought capable.

A terrible anxiety took possession of Mrs. Burker and her servant. What if Dolly should escape them? What if, irresistibly drawn by that vision which brought John back to her memory, she should rush down the steep sides of Knob Hill and throw herself on to the wave-beaten shore.

But suddenly this excitement ceased. The sun had disappeared behind a cloud and the sail was no longer visible on the ocean's surface.

Dolly had become her inert self again ; her eye had resumed its dullness and she was once more unconscious of what was going on around her. The sobs that had swelled her breast ceased, as though all life had been suddenly withdrawn from her. Jane now took her hand, and without any resistance she let herself be led away, and came quietly back to Prospect House.

From that day forth, Len Burker insisted that Dolly should not leave the grounds of the cottage, and Jane had to comply with this injunction.

It was about this time Mr. Andrew decided to communicate with Captain John, since his wife's health now forbade all hope of recovery. The telegram would now be sent to Calcutta, as the *Franklin* must have left Singapore by this time, and John would get it on his reaching India.

And still, although Mr. Andrew now despaired for Dolly, the doctors thought that perhaps a violent shock to her mental system might have a beneficial result ; such a shock, for instance, as she would experience on the day when her

husband would suddenly appear before her. In truth, this was the only remnant of hope left; but small though it was, Mr. Andrew would fain take it into account; and, after praying John not to give way to despair, he urged him to place the command of the *Franklin* with the mate, Harry Felton, and to come home by the shortest possible route himself. If necessary, this kindhearted man would have sacrificed his dearest interests for the sake of making this last trial, and he told the young captain to wire his reply immediately.

When Len Burker read this message, which William Andrew thought right to show him before sending it, he approved of the contents, although expressing a fear that John's return might not produce the desired effect. Jane, on the contrary, heard of this scheme with delight. Yes, the sight of John might bring Dolly back to her senses; and Burker promised to write to him with a view to hasten his returning—a promise, however, which he never kept.

During the few weeks following, there was no change for the better in Mrs. Branican. Although her strength did not give way, and her health was all that could be wished for, the change in her appearance was but too visible. She was only in her twenty-first year, and yet her features were drawn and her fresh complexion had paled as though the fire of her soul had died within her. In truth, it was only at rare intervals that she could be seen, unless in the garden, sitting on a bench, or walking about with Jane, who waited upon her with untiring affection.

By the beginning of the month of June, two and a half months had elapsed since the *Franklin* had left the port of San Diego. From the time of her meeting with the *Boundary* they had had no news of her. By this time, after having put into port at Singapore, she ought to be nearing Calcutta, unless detained by some improbable accident. No very great storms had been reported on the North Pacific or on

the Indian Ocean that could have in any way delayed a good sailing vessel.

William Andrew was greatly surprised at this absence of accurate information. That an agent of his could fail to advise him of the arrival of the *Franklin* at Singapore he did not understand. As to supposing that the ship had not called there, it was out of the question, since Captain John had strict orders on that subject. In any case they would hear from him in a few days when he would reach Calcutta.

A week passed. By the 15th of June no news had come yet. A telegram was then sent to the agent of the Andrew firm asking for immediate information about John Branican and his ship.

The reply came two days later.

Nothing was known of the ship at Calcutta. The American three-master had not even been seen, up to the date mentioned, either on the Indian Ocean or in the Gulf of Bengal.

Mr. Andrew's surprise now changed to anxiety ; and, as it is impossible to keep the contents of a telegram secret, the news soon spread that the *Franklin* had not yet reached Calcutta, or even Singapore. Was another misfortune on the point of befalling the Branican family—a misfortune that would likewise strike all the families in San Diego to which the crew of the vessel belonged !

Len Burker was deeply moved when he heard this alarming intelligence. Yet his affection for Captain John had never been very demonstrative, nor was he a man to be greatly moved by other people's misfortunes, even when his own relatives were concerned ; be that as it may, from the day that the safety of the *Franklin* had to be put in doubt, he seemed more gloomy, more thoughtful, and more reserved than before—even in his business life. Rarely was he to be seen on the streets of San Diego, or at his office in Fleet Street, or anywhere but within the precincts of Pros-

pect House. As to Jane, her pale face, tear-stained eyes, and downcast appearance bespoke the terrible heart's trial she was enduring.

It was about this time that a change was made at the cottage. Without any apparent reason, Burker sent away the servant who had been kept to help Nô, although her conduct was irreproachable; and the colored woman now remained in charge of the household. With the exception of Jane and herself, no one was allowed near Mrs. Branican. As to Mr. Andrew, his health had been severely tried by all these occurrences and he was compelled to discontinue his visits to Prospect House. Indeed, now that the loss of the *Franklin* was almost a certainty, what could he have said, what could he have done? Besides, since she had ceased her walks out of doors, Dolly had grown calm again and her nervous attacks had disappeared. She was living now, vegetating rather, in that quiet, unconscious way, which was the peculiar character of her disorder, and her health required no special care.

Toward the end of June, Mr. Andrew received another telegram from Calcutta. The shipping agents had not heard of the *Franklin* on any point along the course she ought to have followed across the seas of the Philippine and Celebes islands, the Java Sea or the Indian Ocean. Now, as she had been three months from San Diego, it was to be supposed that she had gone down with all on board, either by collision or shipwreck, before even reaching Singapore.

CHAPTER VI.

THE END OF A SAD YEAR.

THIS succession of sad events, to which the Branican family had fallen a victim, placed Len Burker in a position to which the reader's attention should be seriously drawn.

It has not been forgotten that although Mrs. Branican's pecuniary resources were at present very modest, she was the only heir to her uncle, Edward Starter. Still buried in his forest domain, exiled as it were in the most out of the way part of the State of Tennessee, this eccentric being had literally relieved himself of the trouble of giving signs of life to any one. As he was but fifty-nine years old, his fortune might not be available for a long time yet.

Perhaps indeed Starter might have changed his mind, had he known that Mrs. Branican, the only direct relative left to him, had become insane on the death of her child. But he was in ignorance of this double misfortune, and he could not have heard about it, since he had quite as stubbornly declined to receive letters as to write any himself. Of course, Burker could have broken this injunction, seeing the change that had come over Dolly's position; and Jane had even hinted to him that it was his duty to acquaint Edward Starter; but he silenced his wife, and took good care not to follow her advice.

It was to his interest not to write, and he was not the man to hesitate, even for a moment, between his interest and his duty. His daily increasing financial embarrassments were far too great for him to throw away the only chance of a lucky stroke that the future seemed to have in store for him.

His plan was after all very simple: if Mrs. Branican died without leaving any children, her Cousin Jane was the only relative who could inherit her wealth. So, since little Wat's death, Len Burker had been watching the growth of his wife's claim to the Starter inheritance, that is to say, his own in reality.

And in truth, were not things shaping themselves in such a way as to make him one day the possessor of this enormous fortune? Not only was the child dead and Dolly in-

sane, but according to the doctors her recovery could only be effected by the return of Captain John.

And now the fate of the *Franklin* was despaired of. If nothing new turned up during the next few weeks, if John Branican was not spoken to at sea, if the Andrews did not hear of their vessel having put into some port or another, it would be a sure sign that neither the *Franklin* nor her crew would ever return to San Diego. Then the only obstacle between Len Burker and the inheritance would be poor demented Dolly. And, face to face with a desperate situation, what might not this unscrupulous man venture to do, as a last resource, when the death of Edward Starter would have put Dolly in possession of this immense wealth.

On the other hand, it was evident that Mrs. Branican should survive her uncle in order to inherit his fortune. It was then to Burker's interest that she should not die before the money had become hers. He had now but two chances against him: her premature death, or the return of her husband, in the event of his having been wrecked on some unknown island, and ultimately succeeding in making his way home. But this last eventuality was, to say the least, very unlikely, and the total loss of the ship should even now be looked upon as a certainty.

Such was Len Burker's present condition; such were his future prospects, at the very time when he was being reduced to his last resources. For it were idle to ignore that if justice was called in to look into his affairs, he would have to answer an overwhelming charge of embezzlement. Part of the money that had been confided to his care by unsuspecting people, or that he had acquired by dishonest practices, was no longer in his safe. Complaints would surely be made against him, although he was now using the money of one man to pacify another. Such a state of things could not last. Ruin was staring him in the face,—worse than ruin, dishonor,—and, a something which was of

"THERE! THERE!" SHE CRIED (*p.* 50).

much more consequence to such a man, his arrest on the most serious charges.

Mrs. Burker guessed, no doubt, that her husband's position was in danger; but she had no idea it was so serious as to threaten the interference of the law. Nor indeed had the pinch of straitened circumstances been very keenly felt yet at Prospect House.

And this is why.

Since Dolly had become irresponsible, a guardian had to be appointed for her in the absence of her husband. Len Burker, being related to her, had seemed naturally qualified for this post, and had in consequence assumed the complete administration of her means. The money left by Captain John for the requirements of the household, Burker had appropriated for his own use. It was not much, to be sure, as the cruise of the *Franklin* was not to have lasted more than five or six months; but by carefully manipulating Dolly's wedding portion of some two or three thousand dollars, and meting it out to his most exacting creditors, he could gain time, which was for him the chief consideration. And accordingly the dishonest fellow had freely turned his position of trust to his own advantage; had used for his own purposes the property of the helpless one who was both his ward and his relative; and, thanks to these ill-gotten means, he had been able to get a short respite and to dive into new schemes. Once on the road to crime, Len Burker would surely follow it to the end if necessary.

Besides, his dread of Captain John's return was losing ground every day. Weeks went by and the Andrew firm received no news of the *Franklin;* nowhere had she been seen for the last six months. August and September came and went. Inquiries made both in Calcutta and Singapore had failed to give the least clew to the whereabouts of the missing three-master.

Every hope was now abandoned, and all San Diego gave

itself up to mourning. How had she gone down? On this subject the feeling was unanimous, although nothing but conjectures could be indulged in. Since her departure several trading vessels, bound for the same port, had followed the course she must have taken. And, as they found no trace of her, there was but one very likely hypothesis to be made: she had been caught in one of those formidable hurricanes, one of those irresistible tornadoes, that rage about the Celebes or on the Java Sea, and had perished with all hands aboard. Not one man could have been saved. On the 15th of October, 1875, seven months had elapsed since she had left San Diego, and everything seemed to strengthen the belief that she would never return.

So strong had this conviction now grown in the town that subscription lists had just been opened for the relief of the families so cruelly bereaved by the catastrophe. The crew of the *Franklin*, officers and men, belonged to this port, and help was needed for their wives, children, or relatives now without support.

The Andrews headed the subscriptions with a considerable sum. For his own interest, and as a matter of precaution as well, Len Burker also contributed to this charitable undertaking. The other business houses of the town, all the merchants and the storekeepers, followed the example. The result was that the families of the lost crew were to a great extent relieved in their distress, and the fatal consequences of the terrible disaster were proportionately alleviated.

On the other hand, Mr. Andrew considered it his duty to provide for Mrs. Branican's material wants. He was aware that before going away Captain John had left her sufficient resources for a period of six or seven months; and calculating that these funds should be well-nigh exhausted, and unwilling that Dolly should be a burden on her relatives, he resolved to go and see her cousin about it.

On the afternoon of the 17th of October, weak though he still was, the shipowner plodded his way through the upper town and on to Prospect House.

On the outside, no change was visible, save perhaps that the shutters on the ground floor and on the first floor were hermetically closed. The house might have been uninhabited, so silent and mysterious did it look.

Mr. Andrew rang at the gate in the garden fence. Nobody answered. The visitor had been apparently neither seen nor heard.

Was there no one at Prospect House just then ?

A second ring of the bell was followed by the noise of a side door opening.

The negro servant appeared, and on her recognizing Mr. Andrew, a movement of displeasure escaped her, which was, however, unobserved by the visitor.

"Is not Mrs. Branican at home ?" inquired the latter, from over the railing, even before Nô had opened the gate.

"No, sir," she answered, with a singular hesitation, visibly mingled with fear.

"Where is she ?" asked Mr. Andrew.

"Gone for a walk with Mrs. Burker."

"I thought these walks had been given up, as they excited her and brought on fits ?"

"Yes, that's so," replied Nô. "But these few days past she has gone out again. It seems to do her a little good."

"I am sorry that I was not told about it. Is Mr. Burker in ?"

"I don't know."

"Find out, please ; and if he is there, tell him I wish to see him."

Before the servant could reply—and perhaps she might have found considerable difficulty in doing so—the door on the ground floor opened. Len Burker came out and crossed the garden, saying :

"Pray come in, Mr. Andrew. In the absence of Jane, who has gone out with Dolly, allow me to entertain you."

This was not said in that dry manner so usual with the speaker, but in a somewhat tremulous tone of voice.

As it was purposely to see Burker that Mr. Andrew had come to Prospect House, he entered the garden. Then, declining an invitation to go into the drawing-room, he sat down on one of the garden seats.

Burker, thereupon, went on to corroborate what his servant had stated: for some days past, Mrs. Branican had been resuming her walks in the neighborhood of Prospect House, which certainly was very beneficial to her health.

"Will not Dolly return soon?" asked Mr. Andrew.

"I do not think Jane will bring her back before dinner time," replied Burker.

Mr. Andrew seemed greatly annoyed, as he had to be back at his office in time for his mail. Besides, he was not even asked to stay at the cottage until the ladies should come home.

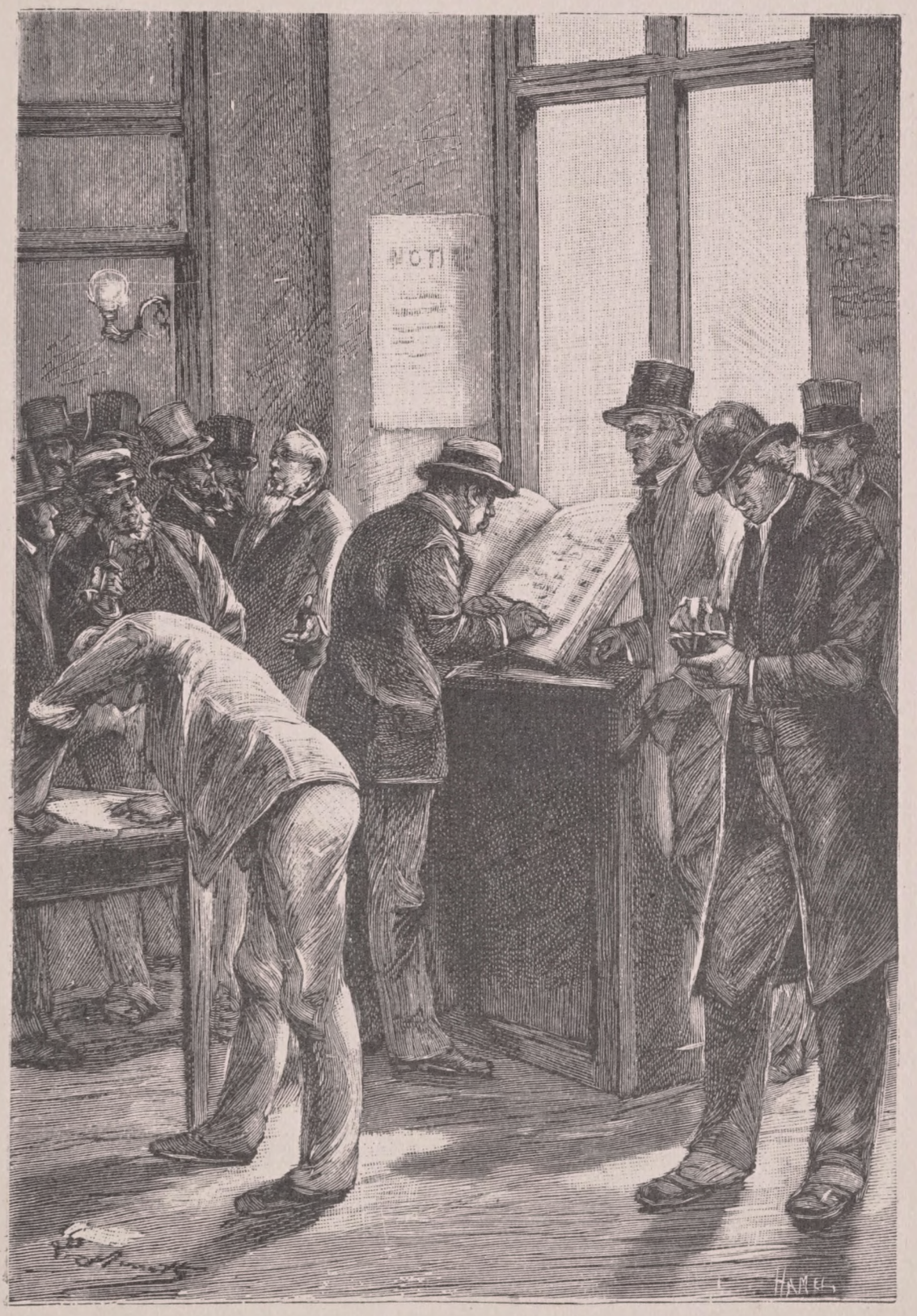
"And you have not observed any improvement in Dolly's condition, yet?" he continued.

"Unfortunately, no, sir. I am afraid we have to deal with a case that no amount of time or care will ever get the better of."

"Who knows, Mr. Burker? What does not seem possible to man is always possible to God!"

Burker shook his head incredulously, as one who had but little belief in the interference of Providence with the things of this world.

"And above all, what is most regrettable," said Mr. Andrew, "is that we are now forbidden to hope for Captain John's return. We must therefore give up also those hopes for Dolly's recovery which we had founded on the effect that his reappearance might have had upon her mind. You



THE NEWS SOON SPREAD (*p.* 53).

are, of course, aware, sir, that we have quite made up our minds on never seeing the *Franklin* again ?"

"I am not unaware of it, Mr. Andrew, and it is one more misfortune added to so many others. And still,—even without the help of Providence," he added with a tone of irony, rather inopportune at such a time,—"to my mind, there would be nothing extraordinary in the return of Captain John."

"What ! after seven months ! and when all the inquiries I have made have brought us no information whatever !"

"But there is no proof that the *Franklin* went down in mid-ocean. Might she not have been wrecked on one of the numerous rocks along the course she followed ? Who knows but John and his men have been thrown on some desert island ? And if so, strong, resolute men as they are, they will eventually manage to escape. Might they not build a boat with the wreck of their ship ? Might not their signals be seen by a vessel passing within sight of the island ? Of course such eventualities as these would require a certain lapse of time. No, sir ! I do not despair of seeing John again in a few months, if not in a few weeks. How many instances are there not on record of shipwrecked seamen who were given up for lost and who turned up again afterward against all expectation !"

This time Len Burker had spoken with a volubility he rarely displayed. His usually impassive features had brightened up. It seemed as though while arguing in this way, and emphasizing the more or less flimsy evidence of the rescue of other mariners, he was arguing not with Mr. Andrew, but with his own self, with his own anxieties, with his own dread of ever seeing, if not the *Franklin* sailing into the harbor of San Diego, at least another ship bringing home Captain John and his crew ; and this would have been the wreck of the plan on which he had based his future prosperity.

"Yes," answered Mr. Andrew, "I know all about that.

I have heard of these almost miraculous escapes. All you have just told me, Mr. Burker, I have said to myself. But I find it impossible to keep up the least hope! anyhow—and that is why I came to see you to-day,—I do not wish Dolly to live at your expense."

"Oh! sir——"

"No, Mr. Burker; and you must allow Captain John's salary to go to his wife, as long as she lives."

"I thank you for her," said the hypocrite. "Such generosity——"

"I am doing what I think is my duty. And as I suppose the money that John left before going away must be nearly gone."

"No doubt, Mr. Andrew; but Dolly has relations of her own, and it is our duty to come to her help; indeed, were it but for love's sake——"

"Yes, I know that Mrs. Burker's devotion can be relied on. Nevertheless, allow me to participate, in this way, in securing for Captain John's wife—his widow, perhaps—the comfort and care which I am sure she would never have failed to receive at your hands."

"Let it be as you like, sir."

"I have therefore brought you, Mr. Burker, what I consider to be the amount due to Captain Branican since the sailing of the *Franklin;* and in your capacity as guardian of his wife, you can henceforth draw his salary every month at my office. Now, if you would be so kind as to give me a receipt for the sum I bring you——"

"With pleasure, Mr. Andrew."

And Len Burker went to his room to make out the receipt in question.

When he came back to the garden, Mr. Andrew, who was very sorry at not having seen Dolly, or being able to wait for her, thanked him for the kindness Jane and he had shown to their unfortunate relative. The old shipowner

"Is not Mrs. Branican at Home?" (*p.* 59).

reiterated his desire to be informed at once of the least change in her condition.; he then took his leave, was shown to the garden gate, and after waiting a moment to see if the two women might not be returning, he wended his way back to town.

As soon as he was out of sight, Len Burker quickly called the colored woman.

"Does Jane know that Mr. Andrew has just been here?"

"Most likely, Len; I guess she saw him coming and going away."

"If he was to come back,—which is not likely, for some time at least,—he must on no account see Jane, or above all Dolly? Do you hear, Nô?"

"I'll see to that, Len."

"And if Jane insisted?"

"Oh! once you say a thing, Jane would not dare go against it."

"Very well, but you must keep a good look out! Chance might bring them together, and a meeting now might mean losing everything."

"I am there," answered the woman, "and you need have no fear, Len! No one will come into Prospect House so long—well, so long as we don't want them to!"

And sure enough, during the next two months the house was more closely shut up than ever. Never were Jane and Dolly caught sight of in the little garden, or even on the veranda, or at the windows of the first floor, which were invariably closed. As to the servant, she only went out of doors for the needs of the household, for the shortest possible time, and always when Len Burker was at home, so that Dolly was never alone with Jane. It could have been observed also that during the latter months of the year Len Burker rarely went to his office in Fleet Street. Weeks sometimes went by without his going there, as though by

decreasing his business he was preparing a new future for himself.

In this manner the year 1875 wore away, a year marked with such fatal occurrences for the Branicans : John lost at sea, Dolly struck in her mental faculties, and their child drowned in the depths of the Bay of San Diego !

CHAPTER VII.

MISCELLANEOUS EVENTS.

NO news of the *Franklin*, during the first months of the year 1876. No trace of her passage across the Philippine, the Celebes, or Java seas. None, either, north of Australia. Indeed, what could have brought Captain John through the Torres Strait ? Once only, north of the Sunda Islands, thirty miles from Batavia, a plank had been picked up by a federal schooner and brought to San Diego, on the assumption that it might belong to the missing ship. But after a minute examination this plank was shown to be of older wood than that used by her builders.

Moreover, this fragment could only have been broken off if the vessel had struck on some rock or had met with a collision. Now, in the latter case the accident could not have been kept so secret but something would have been heard about it—unless both vessels had gone down after the shock. But as there was no other vessel reported as having been lost about the same period, the idea of a collision should be laid aside, as also the supposition of a wreck on the rocks. All surmises failed, save the simplest, viz., that the *Franklin* had gone down, as we have already said, in a Malay tornado.

A year having now gone by since her disappearance, she was definitely placed in the category of ships lost, or pre-

sumably lost ; a list, alas, so formidable in the annals of maritime disasters.

This winter—1875–1876—had been very severe, even in this fortunate region of Lower California, where the climate is generally moderate. With the excessive cold, which continued until the end of February, nobody could be surprised at Mrs. Branican never leaving Prospect House, not even to enjoy a change of air in the garden.

Carried on too far, this seclusion might in the long run seem strange to the people living in the neighborhood of the cottage. Still, it would be more natural for them to suppose that Mrs. Branican had grown worse, than to suspect Len Burker of having some interest in keeping her shut in from public view. So the word " sequestration " was not uttered. As to William Andrew, he was compelled to keep to his room the greater part of the winter. But, being impatient to see for himself how Dolly was getting on, he made up his mind to go to Prospect House as soon as he should be able to go out.

Now from the first week in March, Mrs. Branican resumed her walks in the neighborhood of her home, accompanied by Jane and their attendant. Some time after, Mr. Andrew was able to ascertain that the health of the young woman was in no danger. Physically she was as well as she could be. Mentally, it is true, no improvement was visible : absence of consciousness, of intelligence, of memory, such was, still and ever, the one feature of her mental condition. During her walks, which might have brought back certain recollections to her mind, in the presence of the children she met on her way, or again when gazing on the sea enlivened with distant sails, Mrs. Branican no longer experienced that emotion which had once affected her so deeply. She made no attempt to run away ; safely indeed could she now be left with Jane ; all thought of resistance, all reactive impulse had gone ; she was living in

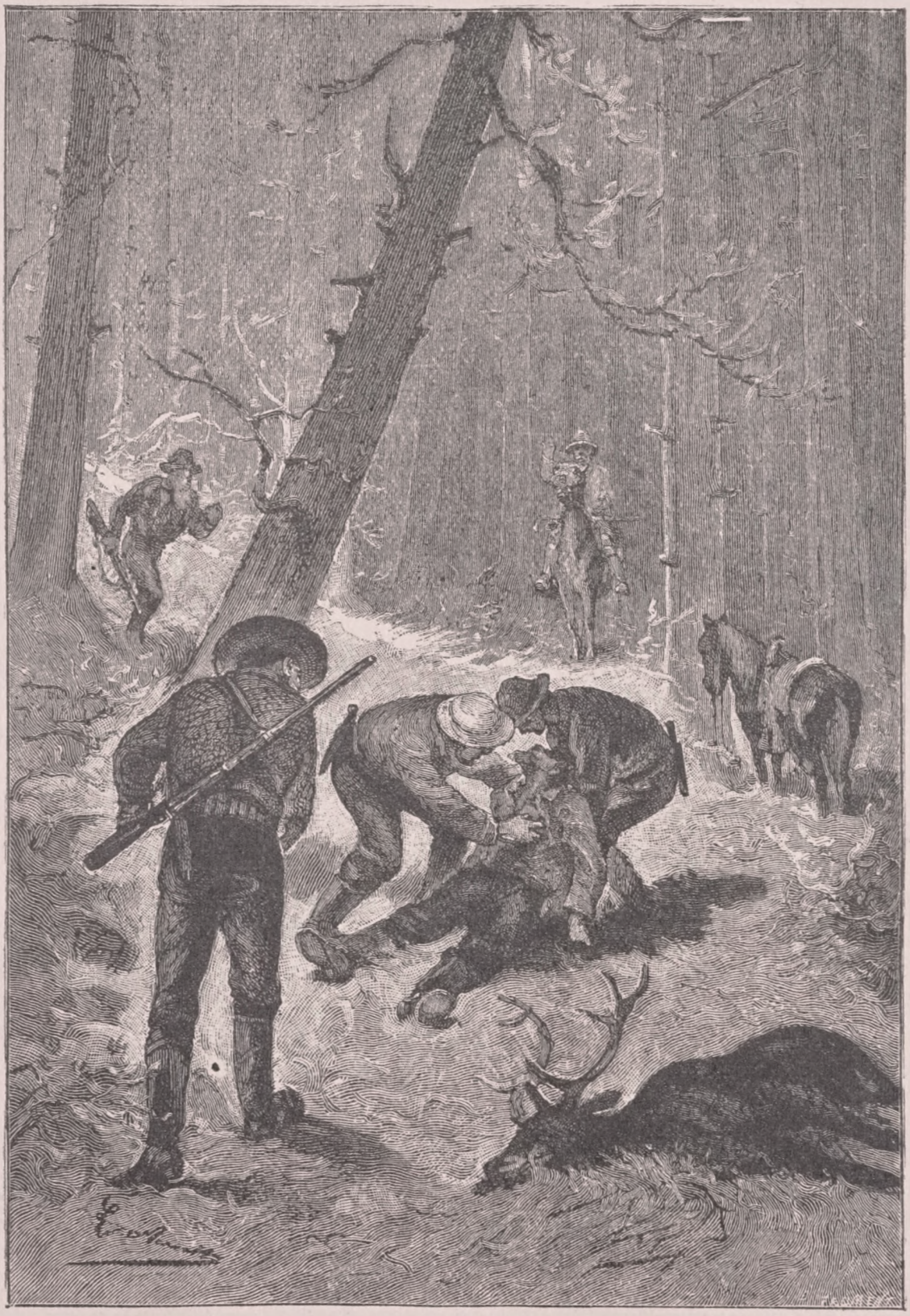
the most absolute resignation, coupled with the most complete indifference. And when William Andrew saw Dolly again, he felt sure her case was incurable.

By this time Len Burker's situation had become untenable. His ward's money, which he had shamelessly appropriated, had not proved sufficient to fill up the abyss he had dug beneath himself. The struggle would come to an abrupt end as soon as the supply would be exhausted. A few months more, perhaps only a few weeks, and he would be entangled in legal proceedings, the consequences of which he could not avoid but by leaving San Diego.

One occurrence alone could save him still, and that seemed very unlikely to happen—in time, at least. If, on the one hand, Mrs. Branican was still alive, her uncle Edward Starter kept alive too, very much alive in fact. Not without unheard-of precautions, so as to preserve the utmost secrecy, Len Burker had managed to obtain some information about this Yankee, right away in Tennessee.

Robust and vigorous, in the full enjoyment of his mental and physical faculties, barely in his sixtieth year, Starter lived in the open air, in the middle of the prairies and forests of that immense territory, spending his leisure time with hunting parties across a country which swarms with game, with fishing parties on the numerous rivers watering it, always rushing hither and thither, on foot or on horseback, seeing with his own eyes to all the details of his vast property. He was, in truth, one of those sturdy North American farmers who die only after a hundred years of age; nor do people quite understand why they graciously condescend to die even then.

For the immediate present, therefore, all thought of the inheritance was out of the question; nay more, it looked uncommonly as though the uncle would outlive the niece. The hopes that Len Burker had built on this eventuality were visibly vanishing and before him stood the perspective



A Bullet, glancing off a Tree, had killed him on the Spot (*p.* 71).

of the inevitable catastrophe which the death of the Tennessee settler could alone have prevented.

Two months elapsed; two months during which his position grew still worse. Alarming rumors were afloat concerning him both in San Diego and out of it. Loud threats were now uttered from people who could get nothing more from him. For the first time Mr. Andrew heard of the true state of things, and, deeply concerned on Mrs. Branican's account, he resolved to compel her guardian to give an account of his trust. If necessary, Dolly's interest should be placed in worthier hands, although Jane Burker's affection for her cousin placed her above any reproach.

Now, by this time, two-thirds of Mrs. Branican's fortune had been devoured, and Len Burker had but a few hundred dollars left of her money. In view of the number of creditors who were pressing him on all sides, this sum was like the veriest drop of water in the Bay of San Diego! But what would have been insufficient for him to clear off his debts, would still prove a great boon if he decided to decamp in order to escape being arrested. And no time was to be lost.

Sure enough, complaints were soon brought up against Len Burker—charges of swindling and wholesale embezzlement. Presently a warrant was issued for his arrest. But, when the police went to his office in Fleet Street, they found he had not been there since the day before.

They thence proceeded to Prospect House. Len Burker had quitted the cottage during the night. Whether she willed it or not, he had obliged his wife to accompany him; the colored servant alone had been left with Mrs. Branican.

An active search for him was made in San Diego, then in San Francisco, and in various parts of the State of California; it proved fruitless.

As soon as the news spread about the town, a storm of indignation arose against the worthless broker, whose

deficit—as was soon ascertained—amounted to a very large sum.

On that day, the 17th of May, Mr. Andrew, having gone to Prospect House early in the morning, found that there was nothing remaining of Mrs. Branican's property. Dolly was absolutely penniless. Her faithless guardian had not even left the wherewith to provide for her immediate wants.

Mr. Andrew adopted the only plan he could follow under the circumstances : he placed Mrs. Branican in a private asylum, where she would be well looked after, and he discharged Nô, in whom he had no confidence.

So, if Len Burker had hoped that the woman would be kept with Dolly, and that she would inform him of any change that might occur in her health or fortune, he was utterly disappointed.

Nô was sent away from Prospect House on the very same day. Thinking that she probably would try to join the Burkers, the police watched her for some time. But the creature, as suspicious as she was cunning, outwitted the officers, and disappeared in her turn, without any one knowing what had become of her.

And now the cottage, where John and Dolly had lived so happily, and had made such dreams for the future of their child, was abandoned.

It was to an asylum conducted by Dr. Brumley, who had already been attending her, that Mr. Andrew brought Dolly. Would the condition of her mind be benefited by this new change in the routine of her daily life ? It was hoped for in vain. She continued on, just as indifferent as she had been in Prospect House. The only thing that seemed worthy of note was that a sort of natural instinct appeared to survive the wreck of her mental faculties. Now and then she would murmur a baby's lullaby, as if trying to put a child asleep in her arms. But little Wat's name never escaped her lips.

Throughout the year 1876, not a word was heard of John

Branican. The few people who still believed that, although the *Franklin* might not come back, her captain and crew would perhaps return, had now to yield to the stern evidence of facts. Confidence cannot indefinitely withstand the destructive action of time. So, the faint hope of the shipwrecked men's return, which had been daily growing less, vanished altogether with the end of the year 1877, when more than eighteen months had elapsed since the last piece of information had been received concerning the missing vessel.

Not more successful were the inquiries made during that same period after the Burkers. Nobody knew to what country they had fled, or where they were hiding, doubtless under a false name.

And, in truth, Len Burker would have had some show of cause to curse his bad luck in not being able to keep up his office in Fleet Street a little longer, had he known that two years after his disappearance the event on which he had built his plans for the future had taken place. It might indeed have been said of him that he had broken down within reach of the goal.

Toward the middle of the month of June, 1878, William Andrew received a letter addressed to Dolly Branican, informing her of the unexpected death of Edward Starter. The Yankee had died through an accident. A bullet, shot by one of his hunting companions, had glanced off a tree, struck him in the heart, and killed him on the spot.

On the will being opened, it was found that he left his whole fortune to his niece, Dolly Starter, the wife of Captain Branican. The present condition of his heiress could not have in any way altered his intentions, since he knew nothing of her ailment, any more than of Captain John's presumed loss.

No tidings of these occurrences had ever penetrated his inaccessible and wild domain in Tennessee, where according

to his orders no letters or newspapers ever found their way.

In farm lands, forests, cattle, and industrial property of all kinds, the fortune of the deceased might be estimated at two million dollars.

Such was the inheritance that the accidental death of Edward Starter had just left to his niece. With what joy San Diego would have applauded this godsend to the Branicans, if Dolly had been still a wife and a mother, in full possession of her reason; if John had been there to share this wealth with her! What good use this charitable woman would have made of it! How many poor people she would have helped! But no! The interests of this wealth would be put aside year by year and would accumulate without benefiting anyone. Away in the hiding-place to which he had escaped, did Burker ever hear of Edward Starter's death and the immense fortune he had left after him? No one could tell.

Mr. Andrew deemed it best, in Dolly's interest, to sell the Tennessee property, farms, forests, and grazing lands, which it would have been difficult to manage at such a distance. Numbers of bidders were forthcoming, and the sale was advantageously effected. The produce of it, turned into stocks, was deposited, along with certain bonds also left by Starter, in the Consolidated National Bank of San Diego. Mrs. Branican's expenses in Dr. Brumley's establishment would only take up a very small part of the interests with which she would be yearly credited, and the accumulation of which would make her, ere long, one of the wealthiest capitalists in Lower California.

Besides, in spite of this change in her pecuniary position, there was no question of removing her from Dr. Brumley's care. Mr. Andrew did not think it necessary. This establishment offered her every comfort and also every care that her friends could desire for her. So she remained there.

DR. BROMLEY ACCOMPANIED HER ON THE BEACH (*p.* 72).

and there she was fated to end that miserable and useless existence, for which such a golden future seemed to have been prepared.

But although time went on, the remembrance of the trials of the Branican family was as vivid in San Diego, and the sympathy inspired by Dolly was as deep and sincere, as on the first fatal day.

The year 1879 began, and all those who thought that, like its predecessors, it would fail to bring any change in the situation were greatly mistaken.

As a matter of fact, from the beginning of the new year, Dr. Brumley and his assistant doctors were struck with a marked alteration in Mrs. Branican's mental condition. That hopeless calm, that apathetic indifference, she had hitherto shown to every detail of life, gradually gave way to a characteristic excitement. Here were no fits, followed by a reaction which left the mind more utterly crushed than before. No ! It seemed as though she felt the need of repossessing herself of her intellectual life ; as though her soul sought to break the fetters that prevented its outpour into the external world. On children who were placed before her she bestowed a kindly look, almost a smile. It has not been forgotten that at Prospect House during the first period of her insanity she had experienced this periodical sort of instinct, which, however, died away, when the nervous crisis had passed. Now, on the contrary, these impressions showed a tendency to be lasting. Dolly seemed like one who questions herself, and who tries to evoke distant recollections from the depths of her memory.

Was Mrs. Branican on the eve of recovering her senses ? Was it a work of regeneration that was going on in her ? Would the full extent of her mental activity be restored to her ? Alas ! Now that she no longer had her husband or her child, was this recovery, one might say this miracle, to

be wished for, seeing that it could only make her the more unhappy.

Whether desirable or not, the doctors saw the possibility of obtaining that result. Everything was done to produce lasting and beneficial impressions on Mrs. Branican's mind and heart. It was thought advisable to take her from Dr. Brumley's and bring her back to Prospect House, to reinstate her in her own room in the cottage. And when this was done, she certainly showed she was conscious of the change that had been made ; she seemed to take pleasure in finding herself in these new quarters.

With the first days of spring--it was then April—the outings in the environs were again resumed. She was taken several times to the beach on Island Point. The few ships that passed in the offing she followed with her eyes, and she stretched her hand toward the horizon. But she no longer tried to run away as before or to escape from Dr. Brumley, who accompanied her. She was not frightened by the angry waves, splashing the beach with their spray. Was one justified in the belief that at those times her imagination carried her away on the course taken by the *Franklin* on leaving the port of San Diego, at the time when her tall sails were disappearing behind yonder high cliffs ? Yes, perhaps so. For, one day, her lips distinctly murmured, " John ! "

It was evident that her malady had just entered a period, the different phases of which should be studied carefully. Little by little, as she grew accustomed to live at the cottage, she recognized, here and there, little objects she once held dear. Her memory commenced to revive amid those surroundings that had been so long her own. A picture of Captain John, hanging on the wall in her room, began to attract her attention. Every day she looked at it more steadily, and a tear—a still unconscious tear—would sometimes fall from her eye.

Yes ! Were not the loss of the *Franklin* now a certainty, could John have been on his way home, had he suddenly appeared before her, Dolly would perhaps have recovered her reason ! But the captain's return was no longer to be hoped for !

That is why Dr. Brumley resolved to produce on the poor woman a shock which would certainly not be free from all element of danger. He determined to act before the improvement, noticed in her mental condition, should perhaps die away ; before she should fall back again into that state of indifference which had been the characteristic feature in her case for the last four years. Since her soul seemed to vibrate still to the memories of the past, one supreme vibration should be impressed upon it, were the chord to snap forever. Yes ! Anything rather than let Dolly go back to that unconscious life which was but another kind of death !

Such, likewise, was the opinion of William Andrew, and he encouraged Dr. Brumley to try this ordeal.

One day, the 27th of May, both of them came for her to Prospect House. A carriage that was in waiting at the door brought them across the town, down to the quays, and drew up at the pier where the steam launch was in readiness to take passengers for Loma Point.

Dr. Brumley's intention was not to rehearse the whole scene of the catastrophe, but to place Dolly in the same circumstances as when she had been so suddenly deprived of her reason.

Just now, Dolly's countenance brightened with an extraordinary glow. She was a prey to a singular animation. There was a convulsion stirring up her whole being.

Dr. Brumley and Mr. Andrew conducted her toward the steam launch ; and she had scarcely put her foot on board, when they were still more surprised at her attitude. Instinctively she went and took the seat she occupied on the

corner of the starboard bench, when she held her child in her arms. Then she turned her head toward the end of the bay in the direction of Loma Point, as though looking for the *Boundary* at anchor.

The passengers on board had recognized Mrs. Branican, and Mr. Andrew having told them of the experiment about to be attempted, all were under the sway of a deep emotion. Would they be witnesses to a scene of resurrection—not the resurrection of a body, but that of a soul?

Needless to add that every precaution had been taken lest, in a movement of frenzy, Dolly should have attempted to throw herself overboard.

They had already gone half a mile, and Dolly's eyes had not yet rested on the surface of the water. They were always looking in the direction of Loma Point, and when, at last, they turned away, it was to watch a trading vessel, under full sail, that had just appeared at the mouth of the harbor, and was going to take its place in quarantine.

A transformation passed over Dolly's face. She stood up, still watching the vessel.

It was not the *Franklin*, nor did she think it was; but shaking her head, she said:

"John! My John! You, too, will be coming back soon, and I will be there to meet you!"

Then suddenly her gaze seemed to search the waters of this bay, that she had just recognized. A heartrending cry burst from her lips, and turning toward William Andrew:

"Mr. Andrew—you——" said she, "and him—my little Wat—my child—my poor baby! There—there—I remember now! I remember now!"

And she fell on her knees on the deck of the boat, her face bathed with tears.

On the steam Launch to Loma Point (*p.* 73).

CHAPTER VIII.

A HARD TASK.

MRS. BRANICAN'S recovery was like the return to life of a dead woman. Since she had survived the recollection of that scene, since that flash of memory had not killed her, could they, dared they, hope that this resurrection would be a definite one? Would not her mind give way a second time when she would be told that the *Franklin* had not been heard of for four years, that the vessel was considered as lost with all on board, and that she would never see Captain John again?

Dolly, entirely crushed with this violent emotion, had been immediately brought back to Prospect House. Neither Mr. Andrew nor Dr. Brumley had left her, and both from them and from the nurses engaged to attend upon her she received all the care her condition required.

But the shock had been so severe that a violent fever ensued. There were even a few days of delirium which gave the doctors great anxiety, although Dolly was now in full possession of her intellectual faculties.

When the time came for her to be told the full extent of her misfortune, what precautions would have to be taken!

And the first time that Dolly asked how long she had been insane:

"Two months," instantly replied Dr. Brumley, who was evidently prepared for the question.

"Two months—only!" she murmured. And it seemed to her it must have been an age.

"Two months!" she added. "John cannot be back yet, then, since he has only been away two months! And does he know that our poor little child——"

"Mr. Andrew wrote," replied the doctor, without hesitation.

"And has any news of the *Franklin* arrived?"

Reply was made that no doubt Captain John had written from Singapore, but that his letters could not have arrived yet. Anyway, judging from maritime intelligence, it was believed the *Franklin* would not be long before reaching India. Telegrams were expected in a few days.

Then Dolly having asked why Jane Burker was not with her, the doctor said that Mr. and Mrs. Burker were away traveling, and that the exact date of their return was not yet known.

The task of acquainting her with the catastrophe of the *Franklin* devolved on William Andrew. But it was agreed that she should not be told until her mind was sufficiently strong to bear this new blow. Nor would he let her know, but one by one, such items as would gradually lead her to the conclusion that not a soul had survived the wreck.

The knowledge of the fortune she had acquired by the death of Edward Starter was likewise held back from her. It would always be time enough for her to be told of her wealth, seeing that her husband could no longer share it with her.

During the ensuing fortnight she had no communication with the outside world. Mr. Andrew and Dr. Brumley were the only persons who came to see her. Her fever, very violent at the beginning, began to abate, and would soon, no doubt, vanish altogether. It was as much for the sake of her health, as to save himself the answering of very embarrassing questions, that Dr. Brumley had enjoined his patient not to talk. Above all, no allusion to the past was ever made in her presence, no remark that would let her see that four years had elapsed since the death of her child, since Captain John's departure. For some time to come it was all-important that the year 1879 should appear to her as the year 1875.

Meanwhile, Dolly had but one wish, or rather a very nat-

ural longing—getting her first letter from John. She calculated that as the *Franklin* was nearing Calcutta, if indeed she had not already arrived there, the Andrew firm would very shortly receive news of the arrival by telegram; the trans-oceanic mail would soon follow; then, the first day she would be strong enough, she too would write to John. Alas! what would she say in that letter,—her first letter to him since their marriage,—seeing they had never been away from each other until the sailing of the *Franklin?* Yes! what sad things this first letter would contain!

Then looking back into the past, Dolly blamed herself for being the cause of her child's death! That unlucky 31st day of March came back to her mind! If she had only left little Wat at Prospect House, he would still be alive! Why had she taken him on that visit to the *Boundary?* Why did she refuse Captain Ellis's offer when he proposed that she should remain on board until the vessel arrived at its dock in San Diego? The terrible misfortune would not have happened! And why, too, with thoughtless impulse, had she snatched the child from its nurse's arms at the time when the boat turned sharply to avoid a collision? She had fallen overboard, and little Wat had slipped from her,—from her, his mother,—and she had not even the instinct to clutch him with a convulsive grasp. And when the sailor brought her back on board, the baby was no longer in her arms! Poor child, who had not even a grave over which his mother could go and weep!

These visions, summoned too vividly before Dolly's mind, prevented her obtaining the rest that was so necessary to her. Several times, violent fits of delirium, due to a return of the fever, greatly alarmed Dr. Brumley. Fortunately, these attacks became weaker, fewer, and at last left her altogether. All danger was now over; the time was fast approaching when Mr. Andrew could tell her all.

As soon as she had entered her period of convalescence,

permission was given her to leave her bed. She was placed in an invalid chair close to the windows of her room, from which she could see the bay of San Diego, and away as far as the horizon beyond Loma Point. There she would sit for hours together without moving.

Then she should write to John; she felt the need of speaking to him about the child he would never see again, and she poured out all her sorrow into a letter that John was never to receive.

Mr. Andrew took the missive, promising to inclose it with his mail for India; and, that being done, she became calmer, living in the hope of getting direct or indirect information about the *Franklin.*

This state of things, however, could not last. Dolly would evidently learn, sooner or later, what was hidden from her—by excess of prudence, perhaps. The more she concentrated herself in the thought that she would soon get a letter from John, every day bringing the date of his supposed return nearer, the more terrible the blow would be!

And this was shown but too plainly after an interview she had with Mr. Andrew on the 19th of June.

For the first time Dolly had gone down to her little garden, where the old shipowner found her seated on a bench in front of the porch of the cottage. He sat down beside her, and, taking both her hands, shook them affectionately.

Now, in the last stage of her convalescence, she already felt strong. Her face had regained its former complexion, although her eyes were scarcely ever tearless.

"I see you are improving rapidly, my dear Dolly," said Mr. Andrew. "Yes, you are much better!"

"No doubt, sir," answered Dolly, "but I seem to have grown so much older during those two months! How changed my poor John will find me on his return! And

then I will be alone to receive him. He will find no one but me."

"Cheer up, my poor Dolly; cheer up! I forbid you to give way in that manner. I am now your father—yes, your father!—and you must comply with my wishes!"

"Dear Mr. Andrew!"

"There, that's right!"

"The letter I wrote to John has gone, has it not?"

"I suppose so—and now you must wait patiently for the answer! There are great delays sometimes in the mail from India! There, you are crying again! I pray you, do cease crying."

"How can I help it, Mr. Andrew, when I think—and am I not the cause of it all, myself?"

"No, you, poor mother, you the cause of it, no! God has sorely tried you—but he has ordered that the bitterest grief shall have an end!"

"God!" she murmured, "God who will send my John back to me!"

"My dear Dolly, has the doctor seen you to-day?"

"Yes, he seemed to think I am improving. I am gaining strength, and soon I will be able to go out."

"Not before he gives you leave, Dolly!"

"No, sir; I promise you not to do anything rash."

"And I rely on your promise."

"You have not heard anything about the *Franklin* yet, Mr. Andrew?"

"No, and I can hardly be surprised? Ships sometimes take a very long time to go to India."

"I thought John might have written from Singapore? Did he not call there?"

"Very probably, Dolly! But were he to miss the mail by a few hours only, it would be enough to delay his letters a fortnight."

"So you are not surprised that John has not been able to write to you yet?"

"By no means," replied the old gentleman, beginning to feel the conversation painfully embarrassing.

"And the shipping newspapers have not mentioned his passage?" she queried.

"Not since he was met by the *Boundary* about——"

"Yes, about two months ago, and, oh! why did that meeting take place! I would not then have gone on board the *Boundary*, and my child——"

The countenance of the bereaved mother had changed, and tears fell fast from her eyes.

"Dolly, my dear Dolly," said Mr. Andrew, "do not grieve so; I entreat you, do not!"

"Ah! Mr. Andrew I know not how—a kind of presentiment comes over me sometimes. I can't explain it. It seems as though some new misfortune—I am indeed anxious about John!"

"But you must not be, Dolly! You have no cause to be anxious."

"Mr. Andrew," interrupted Mrs. Branican, "could you not send me some of your papers, with shipping news in them. I would like to read them."

"Of course I will, Dolly. Besides, if anything was heard of the *Franklin*, whether she had been spoken at sea or her arrival in India had been signaled, I would be the first to know of it, and immediately——"

But it became urgent to give a turn to the conversation. Mrs. Branican would soon notice the hesitation with which William Andrew answered her, and the instinctive lowering of his eyes whenever she questioned him too pointedly. So the worthy shipowner was about to tell her for the first time of the death of Edward Starter, and the immense fortune he had left his niece, when she asked:

SHE KNELT IN AN OUT-OF-THE-WAY CORNER (*p.* 88).

"Jane Burker and her husband are away, I am told! When did they leave San Diego?"

"About two or three weeks ago."

"And won't they soon be coming back?"

"I don't know," replied Mr. Andrew. "We have not heard from them."

"And does not anyone know where they went?"

"No one, my dear Dolly. Len Burker was engaged in very important, very risky transactions. He may have been called away—perhaps very far."

"And Jane?"

"Mrs. Burker had to go with her husband—and I really could not explain what happened."

"Poor Jane!" sighed Mrs. Branican. "I am very fond of her, and I will be pleased to see her again. After all, is she not the only relation left me now!"

Not a thought did she cast on Edward Starter or the family bond that existed between them.

"How is it that Jane never wrote to me, even?" she remarked.

"My dear Dolly, when Mr. Burker and his wife left San Diego you were already very bad."

"Sure enough; and what was the use of writing to one who could not understand! Dear Jane, she is to be pitied so! She must have had a hard life! I was always afraid that Len Burker would run into some speculation that would turn out badly! Perhaps John thought so too!"

"For all that," replied Mr. Andrew, "nobody thought it would end so badly."

"Then it was through unsuccessful speculations that Len Burker was obliged to leave San Diego?" was the sharp inquiry.

And Dolly's eye was fixed on Mr. Andrew, whose embarrassment was but too visible.

"Mr. Andrew," she added, "speak out! Do not hide anything from me. I want to know all."

"Well, then, Dolly, I have no wish to conceal a thing that you would find out yourself. Yes, of late Burker's situation got worse. He could not fulfill his engagements. Complaints were made against him, and, threatened with being arrested, he ran away."

"And Jane followed him?"

"He very probably obliged her to do so; you know that in his presence she had no will of her own."

"Poor Jane! Poor Jane!" murmured Mrs. Branican. "How I pity her; ah, if I had only been able to come to her help!"

"You could have done so. Yes, you could have saved Len Burker; not for his sake, for he deserved no sympathy, but for the sake of his wife."

"And I am sure John would have been pleased with the use I should have made of our modest means."

Mr. Andrew took good care not to tell her that her dowry had all been squandered by the runaway. This would have revealed to her that she had had a guardian, and she might have wondered how in so short a time—scarcely two months—so many things had happened.

So he simply answered:

"Do not speak of your modest position any more, my dear Dolly. Things are changed now."

"What do you mean, sir?" she asked.

"I mean that you are rich—immensely rich."

"I?"

"Your uncle, Edward Starter, is dead."

"Dead! He is dead! Since when?"

"Since——"

This time Mr. Andrew well-nigh betrayed himself by giving the exact date of Edward Starter's death, an event

now two years old, which would have disclosed the whole truth.

But Dolly was absorbed in the thought that her uncle's death and her cousin's disappearance left her without a single relative. And when she learnt that through this uncle, whom she hardly ever knew, and whose inheritance had never appeared to John and herself but a possible eventuality in the distant future, her fortune now amounted to two million dollars, she thought but of the good she might have done with it.

"Yes, Mr. Andrew," said she, "I would have come to poor Jane's help. I would have saved her from ruin and shame. Where is she? Where can she be? What will become of her?"

Mr. Andrew had then to tell her how inquiries made after Len Burker had thus far led to no result. Had he taken refuge in some remote part of the United States, or, more probably, had he been obliged to leave America altogether? It had been impossible to ascertain.

"And still, if they have been only a few weeks gone from San Diego," she observed, "perhaps we will hear."

"Yes—a few weeks ago only," he hastened to add.

Fortunately another consideration now engrossed his questioner's attention: now, thanks to Uncle Starter's fortune, John would not have to travel any more. He would never leave her again, and this present voyage on board the *Franklin* would be his last.

Alas, was it not in truth his last, since Captain John was not expected to return.

"No, sir," cried Dolly, "once John comes home, he will never go to sea again! He will have to give up his seafaring life for me! We will live together, always together! Nothing will ever part us again!"

At the thought that all this happiness would be crushed with a single word,—a word that would soon have to be

spoken,—Mr. Andrew felt his heart sink within him. He hastened to bring this conversation to a close ; but before taking leave, he obtained Mrs. Branican's promise that she would not commit any imprudent act, venture out of doors, or resume the routine of her former everyday life until the doctor had allowed her to do so. On his part he was made to repeat that if any tidings whatever reached him concerning the *Franklin*, he would immediately send up to Prospect House.

When William Andrew went over this interview to Dr. Brumley, the latter did not conceal his fear that some chance indiscretion might reveal the truth to Mrs. Branican : that she had been insane for four years, that during those four years nothing had been heard of the *Franklin*, and that she would never see John again. Yes, it were better Dolly should hear all this either through Mr. Andrew or himself, and with the greatest precautions.

It was therefore agreed that in a week's time, when all plausible excuse for forbidding her to leave the cottage would cease, she should be told everything.

" May God give her strength to endure this blow," said Mr. Andrew.

During the last week in June, Mrs. Branican's life at Prospect House continued its usual run. Thanks to the care with which she was surrounded, she was gaining physical strength at the same time as mental energy. And Mr. Andrew grew more and more embarrassed when Dolly plied him with questions to which he could give no direct answer.

On the afternoon of the 23d, he went to see her, to place a certain sum of money in her hands, as well as to give her an account of the fortune, which he had deposited in her name, in the Consolidated National Bank.

On that day Mrs. Branican appeared to take very little interest in what Mr. Andrew was telling her. She scarcely listened to him. She spoke but of John, and thought but

of him. What! no letter yet! How perplexing! How was it that the firm had not even received a telegram announcing the arrival of the *Franklin* in India?

The shipowner tried to calm Dolly by telling her that he had just sent off some telegrams to Calcutta, and that from one day to another he would have the reply. But if he succeeded at last in turning her thoughts away from India, she almost unmanned him with her next inquiry:

"Mr. Andrew, there is a man that I have not spoken to you about yet. The man who saved me and who failed to save my darling child. That seaman——"

"That seaman?" repeated Mr. Andrew, in a faltering tone.

"Yes, that brave man to whom I owe my life. Has he been rewarded?"

"Of course he has, Dolly!"

And in truth he had been.

"Is he in San Diego?

"No, my dear Dolly; no! I heard that he had gone to sea again."

Which was quite true. The sailor had taken a change from "longshore work," had made several voyages on trading vessels and was at this time away on the ocean.

"But you can surely tell me his name?"

"His name is Zach Fren."

"Zach Fren! Very well. Thank you, Mr. Andrew!" said Dolly.

And she asked nothing more about the sailor, now that she had ascertained his name.

But from that day Zach Fren did not leave her mind. He was henceforth indissolubly coupled in her thoughts with the recollection of the frightful catastrophe in the Bay of San Diego. She would find out this Zach Fren on his return from sea. He had started only a few weeks ago. She would learn on what ship he had embarked—no doubt

a vessel belonging to the port—and the vessel would return again in six months—a year—and then—of course, the *Franklin* would reach home before then. John and herself would be so happy to reward Zach Fren—to pay him their debt of gratitude. Yes ! John could not tarry long now to bring home the *Franklin*, and he would resign his command, and they would not leave each other again !

"And when he does come back," she thought, "oh, why must our kisses be mingled with tears !"

CHAPTER IX.

DISCOVERIES !

MEANWHILE Mr. Andrew wished for, and yet dreaded, that interview in which Mrs. Branican was to hear of the presumed wreck of the *Franklin*, the loss of her crew and of her captain—a loss which no longer excited any doubt in San Diego. Would Dolly's already shattered mind stand this new trial ? Even though four years had elapsed since John's departure, it would be for her as though his death had occurred but the day before ! Time, that had soothed since then so many human sorrows, had stood still for her !

So long as she should remain at Prospect House, there was no fear of her hearing of anything. Mr. Andrew and Dr. Brumley had taken their precautions in that respect, and had so arranged that no letters or newspapers should ever be delivered at the cottage. But Dolly was now strong enough to go out, and although the doctor had not yet given her his authority to do so, might she not leave Prospect House without saying anything about it ? It was urgent, therefore, to hesitate no longer ; and, as it had been agreed, Dolly should soon be told that she must not reckon on seeing the *Franklin* again.

Now, it so happened that after her conversation with Mr. Andrew, she had made up her mind to go out, without letting her maids know, as they would have done all in their power to dissuade her.

And the motive of this outing was a search after her rescuer, Zach Fren!

Since the day she had learnt the seaman's name, she had been persistently beset by one thought.

"He was looked after," she repeated to herself. "Of course he was. A little money was no doubt given him, and without my being able to see to it. And then he went away, say five or six weeks ago. But most likely he has a family, a wife and children—poor people, as a matter of course. It is my duty to go and see them, to provide for their wants, to give them a little comfort! I must see them, and I will do my duty by them!"

And had she consulted Mr. Andrew on this subject, how could he have dissuaded her from performing this act of gratitude and charity?

The 21st of June, Dolly slipped out of the house about nine o'clock in the morning, without having been seen. She was dressed in black—in mourning for her child, whose death, so she believed, had occurred but two months before. It was not without a feeling of deep emotion that she passed through the little garden gate, alone for the first time.

The weather was beautiful, and the heat was already great for this early Californian summer, cooled though it was by the breeze from the sea.

Almost by instinct she made her way through the avenues of the upper part of the town. Wholly taken up with the thought of her errand, and heedless of aught else, she did not notice certain alterations that had been made in the district, and which would otherwise have attracted her attention. At least, she had but a vague perception of

them. Besides, the changes were not of such a nature as to prevent her finding her way down toward the sea. Nor did she remark that two or three people, who recognized her, looked at her with a certain astonishment.

Presently, a Catholic chapel stood hard by, the nearest to her home, and one of which she had been a most assiduous frequenter; she was seized by an irresistible desire to enter. The officiating clergyman was beginning the service as Dolly knelt in an out-of-the-way corner. There, her soul poured itself out in prayer for her child, for her husband, for all she loved. None of the members of the little congregation had seen her enter, and when she rose to go they had already left the chapel.

It was then that she was struck by a slight alteration in the arrangement of the chapel, which did not fail to surprise her. It seemed to her that this was not the altar before which she had knelt so often before. The old one was humbler, of a more ancient style; this one stood in front of a platform which seemed to have been newly constructed. Had the chapel been enlarged lately?

This was at most but a transient impression, which vanished as soon as Mrs. Branican had re-entered the labyrinth of this busy locality, which was now crowded. But at every step she might find out the truth, a poster with a date on it, a railroad bill, an advertisement giving the departures of the Pacific liners or the announcement of some fête or entertainment bearing the date 1879, and then Dolly would be abruptly confronted with the fact that Mr. Andrew and Dr. Brumley had been deceiving her; that she had been insane for four years, not a few weeks. And then the inevitable inference that the *Franklin* had been gone, not two months, but four years! And if all this had been concealed from her, it was because John had not come back—never would come back!

She was hurrying on toward the quays, when the idea

SURPRISE GIVES WAY TO A VAGUE SENSATION OF UNEASINESS (*p.* 89).

struck her to pass by Len Burker's house. It would be but a slight detour.

"Poor Jane!" she murmured.

When in front of the office in Fleet Street she could hardly recognize it, and now her feeling of surprise gave way to a vague sensation of uneasiness.

Sure enough, instead of the dark, narrow house she remembered, there stood before her a pretentious building, of Anglo-Saxon architecture, several stories high, with tall windows, railed in on the ground floor. On the roof rose a toweret, over which waved a flag bearing the initials H. W. By the side of the door was a plate on which could be read in gold letters the words :

HARRIS WADANTON & CO.

At first Dolly thought she had made a mistake. She looked to the right and to the left. No! It was undoubtedly here, at the corner of Fleet Street, that she used to call on Jane.

She passed her hand over her eyes. An unspeakable presentiment stilled the throbbing of her heart. She could not understand the feeling she experienced.

Mr. Andrew's office was not far. A few paces farther she caught sight of it at a turn of the street. At first she thought of going in. No. She would call on her way back, after seeing Zach Fren's people. She would surely find the sailor's address at the office of the steam launch company, near the pier.

With a dazed mind, suspectful eye, and faltering heart, Dolly went on. Her gaze now rested on everyone she met. She would fain have gone straight to those people and questioned them, and asked them—what? They would have taken her for a mad woman, and was she quite sure

that her mind was not giving way once more? Might there be intermittent gaps in her memory, perhaps? Could it be she had not regained complete possession of herself?

She at last reached the quays. From there she had a full view of the bay. A few ships were riding at anchor. Others were getting under sail. What recollections this activity brought back to her mind! Not quite two months ago she was standing at the end of this wharf. It was from this spot she had seen the *Franklin* turn one last time to make for the entrance of the bay. It was there she had heard John's last adieu! Then the vessel had rounded Island Point, the tall masts being visible for a moment above the rocks, and the *Franklin* had disappeared altogether out to sea.

A moment later Dolly stood before the steam launch office, near the passenger landing-stage. One of the little boats was even now starting for Loma Point.

She kept watching it, listening to the puffing of the steam as it issued from its dark funnel.

Over what painful scenes her mind wandered back once more!

Those billows that had engulfed her baby boy, and would not even give up his tiny corpse, attracted her, fascinated her. She felt herself sinking, as though the ground was giving way from under her. Her head was dizzy. She was near falling. And she tottered rather than walked into the steam launch office.

On seeing the poor woman with contracted features and blanched cheeks, the clerk, who was sitting at a table, stood up and offered her a chair.

"You are ill, madam?" he asked.

"A mere nothing, sir," answered Dolly. "I felt a little faint. I am better already."

"Kindly take a seat until the next boat. She will be here in ten minutes at most."

"Thank you, sir," interrupted she. "I have come here to get some information. Perhaps you can give it me."

"What about?"

Dolly sat down, and, after having passed her hand over her forehead to collect her thoughts, she commenced:

"You had in your employ a sailor named Zach Fren, I believe?"

"Yes, madam; he did not stay long with us, but I knew him well."

"He is the man, is he not, who risked his life to save a woman—an unfortunate mother."

"Quite so, quite so; I remember it well. Mrs. Branican was the lady. Yes, that is the man."

"And now he is at sea?"

"He is."

"On what ship did he embark?"

"On the three-master *Californian*."

"Of San Diego?"

"No, madam, of San Francisco."

"Bound for what port?"

"For the European seas."

Mrs. Branican, more exhausted than she could believe, remained quiet for a few moments, and the clerk waited for her to question him further. When she was somewhat rested she resumed:

"Zach Fren is from San Diego, is he not?"

"Oh, yes, he is."

"Can you tell me where his family lives?"

"I have always heard it said that Zach Fren was alone in the world. I don't believe he has a single relative in San Diego or anywhere else."

"He was not a married man?"

"No, madam."

The clerk's replies could evidently be trusted since he

knew Zach Fren so well ; and so for the present there was nothing to be done, no distressed family to relieve, and Mrs. Branican would have to wait the *Californian's* return to America.

"Do you know how long Fren's trip is likely to last?" she asked.

"That I could not tell, madam ; you see the *Californian* has gone on a very long cruise."

"I am much obliged to you, sir. It would have given me great pleasure to meet Zach Fren again, but I suppose it will be some time yet."

"I guess it will!"

"In any case there will be some tidings of the *Californian* in a few months—a few weeks, perhaps?"

"Tidings!" repeated the clerk. "Why I reckon the owners of the ship at San Francisco must have heard about her several times already."

"Already?"

"Certainly, madam!"

"Several times, you said?"

And with these words on her lips, Mrs. Branican stood up, and stared at the man as though she did not understand what he said.

"Here, madam," replied the latter, handing her a newspaper. "Here is the *Shipping Gazette.* It says that the *Californian* left Liverpool a week ago."

"A week ago!" she repeated, taking the paper with a trembling hand.

Then, in a voice so strangely altered that the clerk could scarcely hear her, she inquired :

"How long has Zach Fren been away?"

"Eighteen months."

"Eighteen months?"

Dolly supported herself on the corner of the table. Her blood ran cold in her veins.

Suddenly her eyes caught sight of a time table, hung on the wall, announcing the alterations in the service of the steam launches for the summer season.

On the top of this sheet was the date :

MARCH, 1879.

March, 1879 ! She had been deceived ! Her child had been dead four years. John had been gone from San Diego four years. She had been insane four years ! Yes! And if Mr. Andrew and Dr. Brumley had led her to believe that her illness had lasted but two months, it was with a view to hide from her the truth about the *Franklin*. They had been for four years without news of John or his ship.

To the clerk's great dismay, Mrs. Branican was seized with a violent spasm. But with a supreme effort she recovered her self-possession. Straightway leaving the office she darted quickly through the streets of the lower part of the town.

Those who noticed this woman pass by, with pale face and haggard eyes, must have thought she was a lunatic.

And although such was not the case yet with poor Dolly, who could have said she was not once again on the brink of the abyss ?

Where was she going ? To Mr. Andrew's house, which she reached, almost unconsciously, a few minutes later. Right through the outer offices she walked, regardless of the clerks who scarce dared to stop her, and pushed open the door of the private office where the shipowner was sitting.

Mr. Andrew was first bewildered by Mrs. Branican's sudden appearance, then terrified at the sight of her distorted features and death-like pallor.

And before he was able to speak to her :

" I know it, I know all ! " she cried. " You have deceived me ! I was insane for four years ! "

" My dear Dolly, calm yourself ! "

"Tell me! the *Franklin!* She has been away four years, has she not?"

Mr. Andrew bowed his head.

"You have not heard anything of her for four years, not for four years?"

Mr. Andrew still remained silent.

"The *Franklin* is considered as lost; none of the crew will ever come back. I am never to see John again!"

Tears were the only answer the old man could give.

Suddenly Mrs. Branican fell into an armchair. She had fainted.

Assistance was at once forthcoming. One of the employees was sent off for Dr. Brumley, who lived in the neighborhood, and he came almost immediately.

Mr. Andrew explained what had happened. Either through some indiscreet gossip, or perhaps by some unlucky chance, Mrs. Branican had learnt the truth. Whether at Prospect House, or on the streets of San Diego, it mattered very little! She knew it all, now! She knew that her child had been dead four years, that her insanity had lasted four years, and that for four years the *Franklin* had not been heard of!

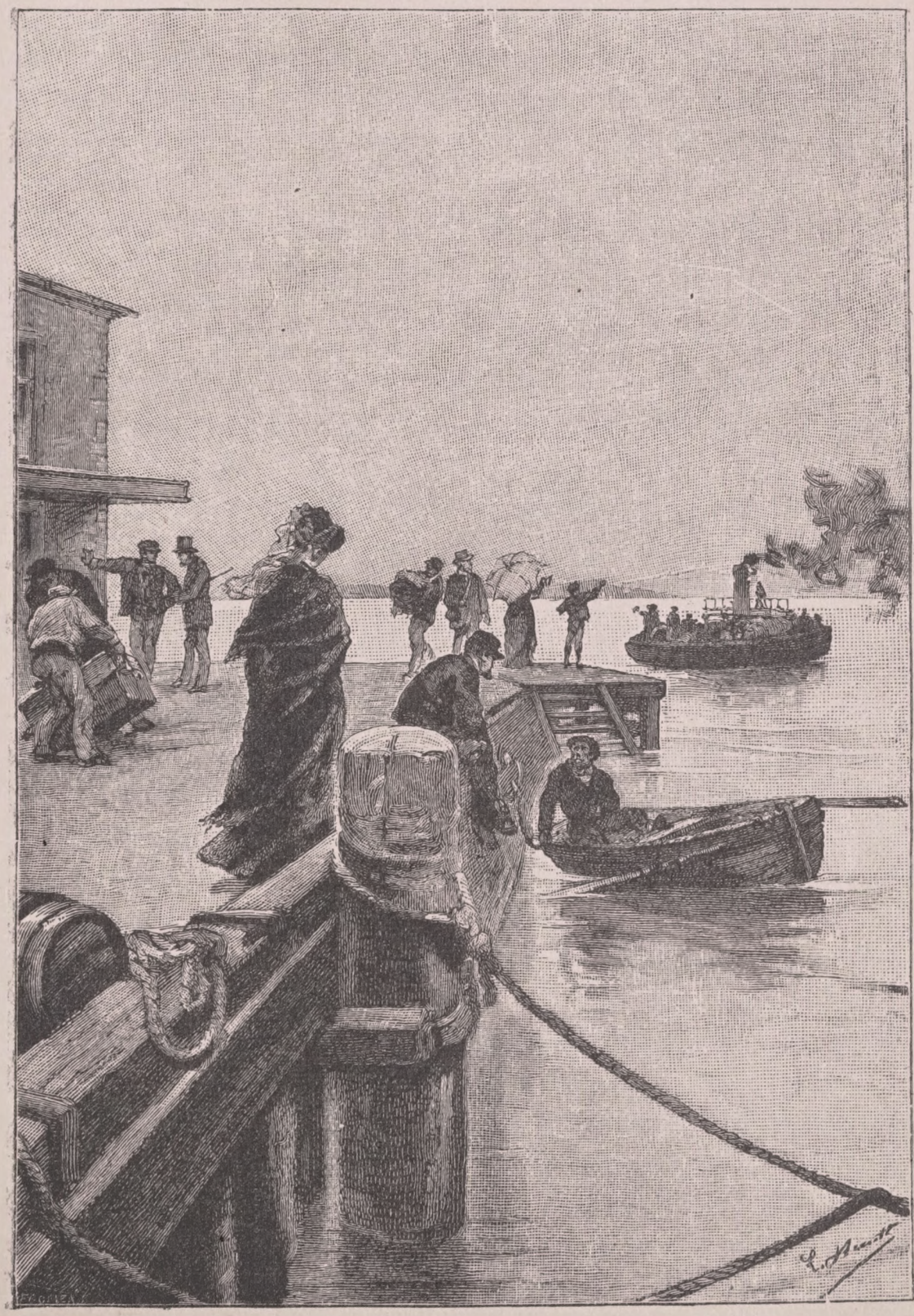
It was not without great difficulty that Dr. Brumley succeeded in reviving the unfortunate woman, wondering the while whether her mind had been able to withstand this last shock—the worst that had befallen her.

When at last she had recovered consciousness, she still knew what had just been revealed to her! She had returned to life with unimpaired faculties! And, through her tears, her eye seemed to question Mr. Andrew, who was kneeling by her side holding her hands in his.

"Speak, speak, Mr. Andrew!"

These were the only words she could utter.

Then, in a voice broken by sobs, William Andrew rehearsed the sorrowful tale; told her of the apprehension



SHE AT LAST REACHED THE QUAYS (*p.* 90).

caused at first by the lack of information concerning the *Franklin;* of the letters and telegrams that were sent to Singapore and to India, where the vessel had never reached; of the inquiries that were made all along the course which must have been taken by the ship; told her that nothing had been found that could give them the least indication of the wreck!

Mrs. Branican lay motionless and listened in silence.

And when he had finished:

"My child dead—my husband dead!" she murmured. "Ah! why did not Zach Fren let me die, too!"

But her face brightened again suddenly, and her natural energy reasserted itself with such vigor that Dr. Brumley became alarmed.

"From the time of your last researches," said she, in a firm tone of voice, "nothing has been heard of my poor husband's boat?"

"Nothing," answered Mr. Andrew.

"And you consider her as lost?"

"Yes—undoubtedly lost!"

"And of John and his crew no news has been received?"

"None, my poor Dolly; and now we have no more hope."

"No more hope?" she interrupted, almost ironically.

She had stood up, raising her hand to one of the windows from which a full view of the sea could be obtained.

Mr. Andrew and the doctor were anxiously watching her, dreading the worst for her mind.

But Dolly was in full possession of herself, and her gaze was aglow with the fire of her soul.

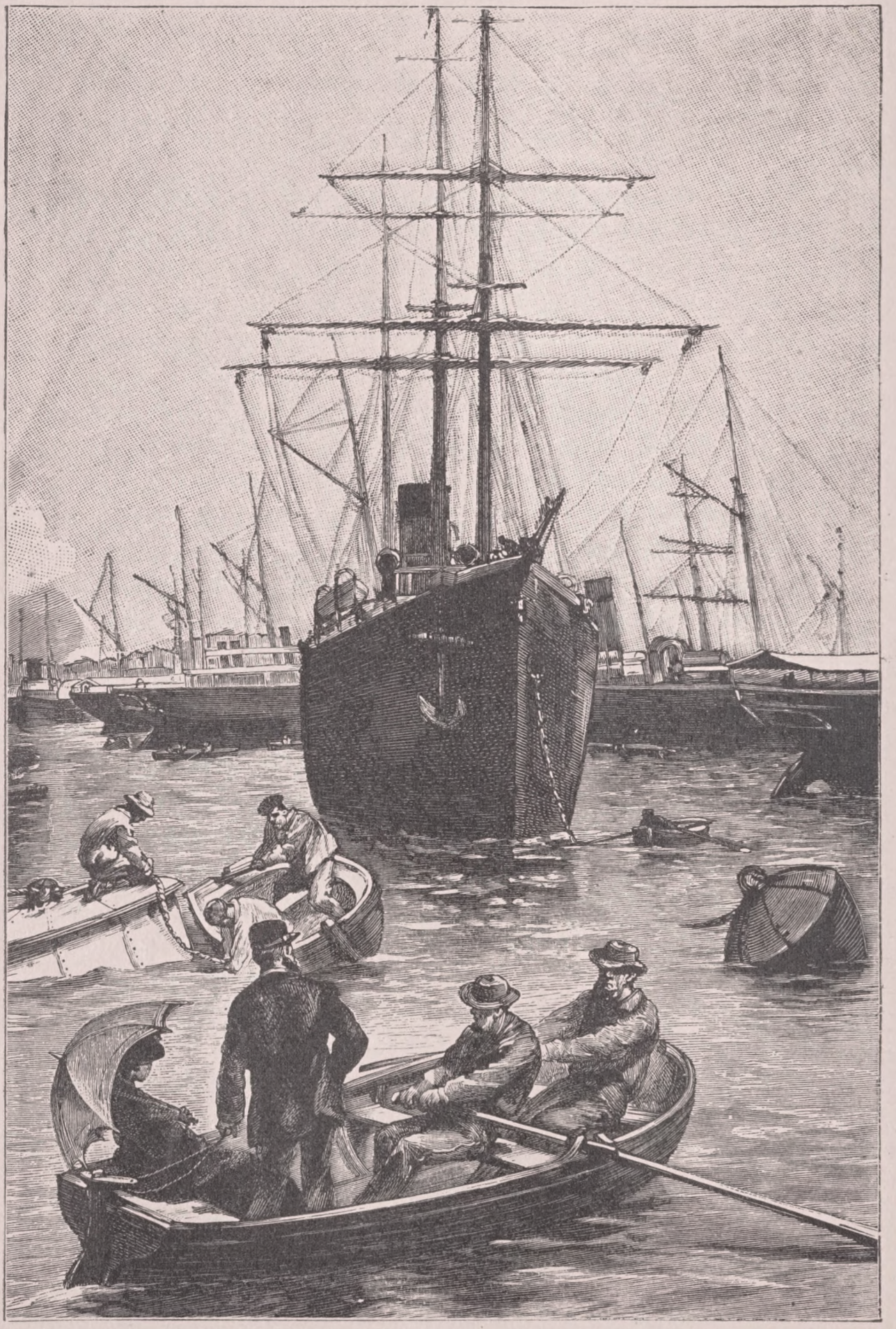
"No more hope!" she repeated. "You say no more hope! Mr. Andrew, if John is lost for you, he is not lost for me! The wealth that is now mime, I will not have without him. I will spend it all to find John and his companions! And with the help of God, I will find them! Yes, I will find them!"

CHAPTER X.

PREPARATIONS.

MRS. BRANICAN was now on the eve of a new life. If the death of her child was an absolute certainty, the case of her husband was different. Might not John and his crew have survived the wreck of their ship, and have taken refuge on one of the numerous islands of the Philippine, Celebes, or Java seas? Was it not possible for them to have been taken prisoners by some of the natives, and have been unable to make their escape? It was to this last hope that she clung, and with such obstinacy that she was not long in reversing public opinion in San Diego concerning the *Franklin*. No! she did not believe, she could not believe, that John and his men had perished, and to this persistent idea, perhaps, it was due, that her mind had not given way a second time. Unless, indeed, as some were inclined to believe, this was, of itself, a kind of monomania, a sort of mental disorder that might be called "the folly of hoping against hope." But it was nothing of the kind, as will be seen later. Mrs. Branican had regained all her intellectual powers, and, chief among them, the sound judgment that had always characterized her. The one idea, that of finding John, was always and ever before her, and pursue it she would with an energy that coming events would only increase.

Since God had so willed it that Zach Fren had saved her from death, that she had now recovered her senses, that every possible means of action that wealth can supply had been placed at her disposal, it was a sure sign that John was still alive, that she was fated to save him. Her immense fortune, she would spend it on incessant searches. She would give it away as rewards, she would use it in equipments. There would not be an island, not an islet on the



MRS. BRANICAN HAD NOT REMAINED IDLE (*p.* 100).

seas likely to have been sailed by the young captain, that would not be made out, visited, and thoroughly explored. What Lady Franklin had done for John Franklin, Mrs. Branican would do for John Branican, and she would succeed where the widow of the illustrious admiral had failed.

From that day forth, Dolly's friends understood that they should help her in this new period of her existence, encourage her in her investigations, join their efforts with hers. And that is what Mr. Andrew did, although he placed but little reliance on the success of any searches for the survivors of the wreck. So he became Mrs. Branican's most ardent adviser, and found a valuable help in the captain of the *Boundary*, whose ship happened to be unloading at San Diego at the time. Captain Ellis, a resolute man who could be trusted, and a devoted friend of John, was invited to come and talk with her and William Andrew ; and frequent were the meetings at Prospect House.

Rich though she now was, Dolly had no thought of leaving her modest cottage. It was there John had left her on going away, it was there he would find her on his return. Nothing should be altered in her mode of life, so long as her husband was away from San Diego. The same simplicity should reign in her household, the same moderation in her expenditure, save in what concerned her momentous search or her works of charity.

All this was soon known about town, and still increased the sympathy already felt for the plucky woman, who would not acknowledge herself John Branican's widow. Without her knowing it, she had become the idol of the town ; she was admired, venerated even, for her misfortunes justified veneration. Not only were prayers universally uttered for her success in the expedition she was preparing, but the general faith in that success was growing apace. Whenever Dolly came down town to visit either Mr. Andrew or Captain Ellis, and she was seen walking along, sad and re-

served, draped in mourning, an aged woman before her time,—she was scarcely twenty-five years old yet,—people took off their hats or bowed as she passed. But in truth she saw nothing of all these tokens of deference.

During her interview with the shipowner and the captain, the first thing studied had been the course which the *Franklin* must have followed. It was important this should be mapped out from the start, with strict accuracy.

The firm had sent their ship to Calcutta by way of Singapore, where she was to unload a portion of her cargo before proceeding to India. Now, after getting into the open sea, west of the American coast, it was probable that Captain John had made for the Hawaiian or Sandwich group. After crossing the micronesian zones, the *Franklin* had very likely sailed for the Marianne and Philippine Islands; then by way of the Celebes Sea and the Strait of Macassar on to the Java Sea, and thence to Singapore. At the western extremity of the Strait of Malacca, formed by the peninsula of that name and the Island of Sumatra, is the Gulf of Bengal, in which, except at the Nicobar and the Andaman Islands, the shipwrecked men could have found no refuge. Besides it was beyond doubt that John Branican had not been seen in the Gulf of Bengal. So, since he did not put into port at Singapore,—which was now but too certain,—he must not have gone beyond the limit of the Java Sea and the Sunda Straits.

As to supposing that instead of taking this course, the *Franklin* had tried to reach India by the dangerous passes of the Torres Strait, along the northern coast of Australia, no sailor would hear of such a thing. Captain Ellis affirmed that John Branican could not have needlessly committed such an imprudent act as to venture among the dangers of this strait. This hypothesis was utterly abandoned ; it was on the Malay seas alone that the search should be made.

Sure enough, among the Carolines, the Celebes, and the

Java Sea, islands are counted by thousands, and it was there only that the crew of the *Franklin*, in case of their surviving the wreck, could have been abandoned, or captured by some tribe, without any chance of escape.

These several points settled, it was agreed that an expedition should be sent to the Malay seas, and Mrs. Branican made a proposal to which she attached great importance. She asked Captain Ellis if he would take command of this expedition.

The captain was free at the time, since the *Boundary* had been laid up by the firm. So, although surprised by the unexpectedness of the proposal, he put himself at Mrs. Branican's service without any hesitation, Mr. Andrew not only consenting, but warmly thanking him for so doing.

"I am only doing my duty," he replied, "and everything I can do to find the survivors of the *Franklin* I will do. If Captain John is still alive——"

"John *is* alive!" asserted Mrs. Branican in so affirmative a tone that even the most incredulous would not have dared to contradict her.

Captain Ellis then brought forward for discussion several points that had to be agreed upon. The engaging of a crew worthy of seconding his efforts would be an easy matter. But then, there was the question of the ship. It was evident that the *Boundary* would not do for an expedition of this kind. A sailing vessel could not undertake such a voyage; a steamship was needed.

There was, at the time, in the port of San Diego, a certain number of ships suitable for such a cruise. Mrs. Branican commissioned the captain to purchase the very fastest of them, and placed the necessary funds at his disposal. A few days later the matter had been concluded, and Mrs. Branican was owner of the *Davitt*, a name she changed to the more auspicious one of *Dolly's Hope*.

It was a screw steamer of 900 tons, fitted out in such a

way as to be able to take aboard sufficient coal for a long voyage, without needing a fresh supply. Rigged as a three-mast schooner, carrying considerable canvas, and a 1200-horse power engine, she attained an average speed of fifteen knots an hour. With such tonnage and such a speed, the *Dolly's Hope* seemed all that could be desired for a voyage across narrow seas, dotted with small islands and rocks. It would have been hard to find a better one for such an undertaking.

Three weeks were all that was needed to get ready, to look to the boilers, see to the engine, to make the necessary repairs to her masts and rigging, regulate the compass, ship the coal, and take on board sufficient provisions for over twelve months. For Captain Ellis was resolved not to leave the seas in which the *Franklin* was supposed to have been lost, until he had explored all the islands on which the survivors could have taken refuge. He had given his word on it as a sailor, and he was not the man to break his promises.

Adding a good crew to a good ship was increasing her chances of success, and, in that respect, Captain Ellis had every reason to congratulate himself on the alacrity with which the maritime population of San Diego came to his help. The very best seamen of the port offered their services. They vied with each other for the right to start in search of the lost crew, every man of which belonged to the town.

The crew of the *Dolly's Hope* was composed of a mate, a lieutenant, a boatswain, a quartermaster, and twenty-five men, including engineers and firemen. Captain Ellis felt sure that he could rely on these devoted and courageous sailors, however long the voyage might last across the Malay seas.

Needless to say that while these preparations were going forward, Mrs. Branican had not remained idle. The assist-

ance she gave Captain Ellis was incessant ; no difficulty was allowed to stand in his way that money could remove ; no stone should be left unturned to secure the success of the expedition.

In the meantime this good-hearted creature had not forgotten the families whom the loss of the *Franklin* had left in want or misery. In this case, as we know, she merely supplemented the work already commenced by the Andrew firm and kept up by public subscriptions. Henceforth, these families would be sheltered from want while waiting for Mrs. Branican's expedition to restore to them the survivors of the *Franklin.*

Why could Dolly not do, for Jane Burker, what she had done for these poor people ? She knew how good this poor woman had been to her during her illness. She knew that Jane had not left her a moment. And now she would still be at Prospect House, sympathizing with her hopes, had not the deplorable state of her husband's affairs obliged him to leave San Diego, and very probably the United States. Whatever blame was due to Len Burker, Jane's conduct toward her cousin had been that of an affectionate, nay a most devoted, relative. Dolly loved her in return, and when thinking of her deplorable situation, her greatest regret was the sense of her inability to show the gratitude she felt by coming to her help. But do what he might, William Andrew had been unable to find out what had become of the Burkers. True, even though their hiding place had been discovered, Mrs. Branican could not bring them back to San Diego, since Len Burker was under sentence for embezzlement, but she could have sent Jane that help of which she must be in sore need.

On the 27th of July the *Dolly's Hope* was ready to start. Mrs. Branican went on board in the morning, to beg Captain Ellis, one last time, to spare nothing in order to discover some signs of the *Franklin.* She had no doubt

whatever but that he would succeed. John and his crew would be found! She repeated these words with such conviction that the sailors hurrahed with delight. All shared her faith, as well as did their friends and relations, who had come to witness the departure of the steamer.

Then Captain Ellis, addressing Mrs. Branican and Mr. Andrew, who had accompanied her on board:

"Before you, madam, and you, Mr. Andrew, in the name of my officers and crew, I swear, yes! I swear to face any danger, to spare no toil, in order to find Captain John and the crew of the *Franklin*. This ship you have called *Dolly's Hope;* she shall be worthy of the name!"

"With God's help and the devotion of those who place their trust in him!" added Mrs. Branican.

"Hurrah!" shouted the hearers. "Hurrah! for John and Dolly Branican!"

And the hurrahs were re-echoed by the people who were crowding the wharves.

Her moorings were cast loose, the *Dolly's Hope* steamed slowly toward the mouth of the bay. Then, once clear of the narrow outlet, she made straight for the southwest, and was soon lost to view.

CHAPTER XI.

FIRST EXPEDITION TO THE MALAY SEAS.

ON the 27th of July, after a run of 2200 miles, the *Dolly's Hope* sighted the Mounakea Mountain, which towers 15,000 feet above the Hawaï Island, the most southern of the Sandwich group.

Independently of five large islands and three smaller ones, this group contains quite a number of little islets, on which it would be useless to look for traces of the *Franklin*. It was obvious that the wreck should have been heard

of long since, had it happened on the numerous reefs of this archipelago, even those of Medo-Manou, although their only inhabitants are numberless sea birds. In truth, the Sandwich Islands are rather thickly populated,—the island of Hawaï alone has 100,000 inhabitants,—and thanks to the French, English, and American missionaries who live on these islands, the news of the disaster would have promptly reached the ports of California.

Besides, four years previously, when Captain Ellis met the *Franklin*, the two ships were even then beyond the Sandwich group. The *Dolly's Hope* continued her course southwest across this beautiful Pacific, which well deserves its name during the few months of the warm season.

Six days later the fast-going steamer had crossed the conventional line drawn by geographers from south to north between Polynesia and Micronesia. In this western part of the Polynesian seas, Captain Ellis had no investigations to make. But, further on, the Micronesian seas swarm with islands, islets, and rocks; it was there the perilous task of finding out signs of a shipwreck was to be undertaken.

The 22d of August, Otia was reached; the most important island of the Marshall group, visited by Kotzebue and the Russians in 1817. This group, scattered over a distance of thirty miles from east to west, and thirteen miles from north to south, contains no less than sixty-five islets or *attolons*.

Although the *Dolly's Hope* could have taken her supply of fresh water from the island in a few hours, she stayed there five days. Embarking on the ship's steam launch, Captain Ellis ascertained that during the last four years no ship had been lost on those rocks. They came across some débris along the Mulgrave Isles; but they were only trunks of pine, palm, or bamboo trees brought by the current from the north or south, and used by the inhabitants for the building of their pirogues. It was further ascertained from

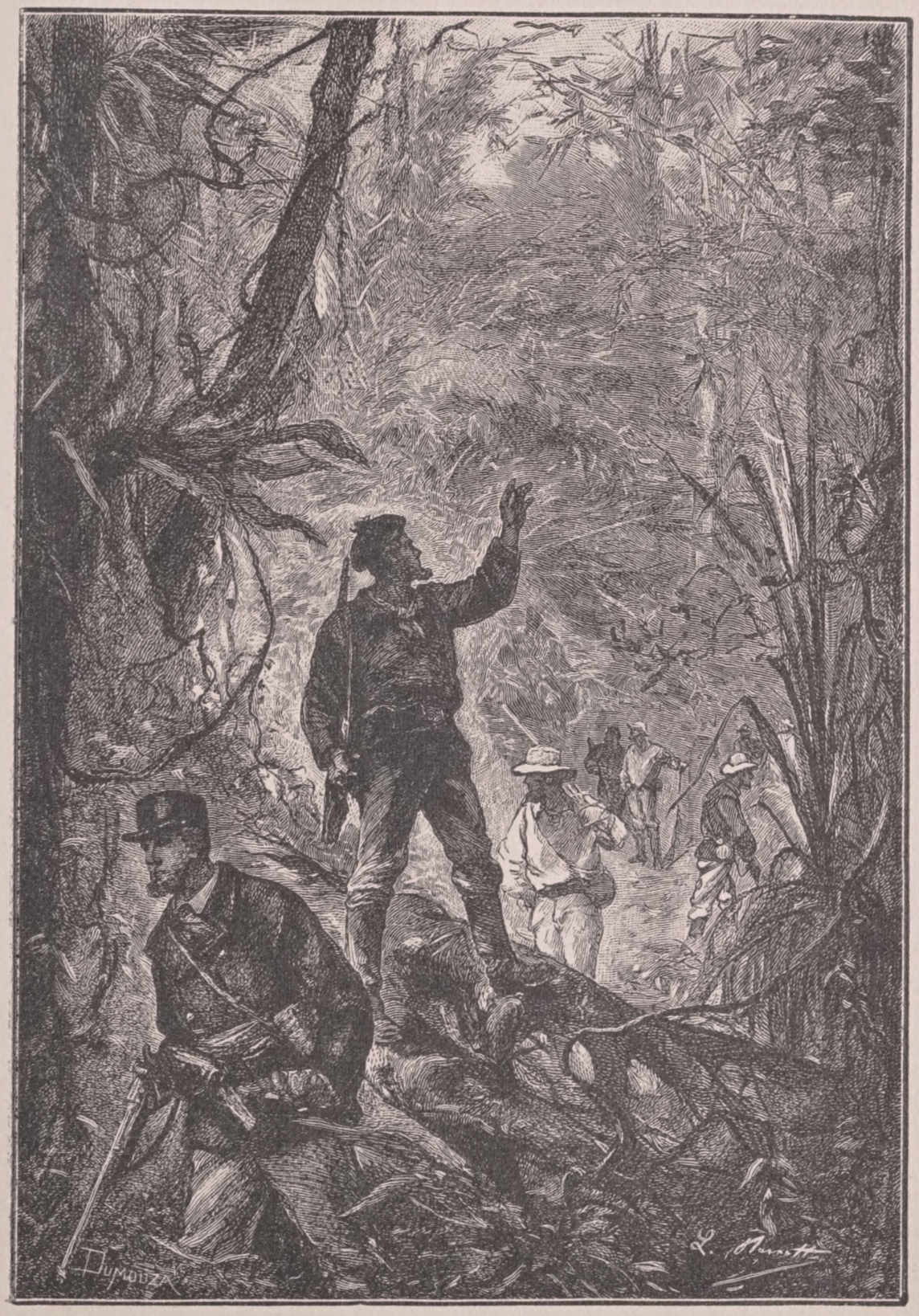
the chief of the Otia Island, that since 1872 a single vessel had been thrown on the rocks to the east, and that was an English brig, whose crew was subsequently sent home.

On leaving the Marshall archipelago, the *Dolly's Hope* made for the Carolines. On passing Oualam Island, the steam launch was sent to explore it, without any result. On the 3d of September the vessel entered the vast archipelago, stretching, on one side, between the 12th degree of latitude north and the 3d degree latitude south, and on the other, between the 129th degree longitude east and the 170th degree longitude west—say 125 leagues from north to south on both sides of the equator, and about 1000 leagues from west to east.

The *Dolly's Hope* remained three months in these Caroline seas, now comparatively well known through the labors of Lütke, the audacious Russian navigator, superadded to those of the two Frenchmen, Dupetrey and Dumont d'Urville. It did not require less time to visit successively the principal groups forming this archipelago, the Pellen, the Dangereuses-matelotes, the Martyrs, the Saavedra, the Sonsorol, the Mariera Isles, the Anna, the Lord North, etc.

Captain Ellis had made Yap, or Gouap, the center of his operations, an island belonging to the Caroline group, properly so called, which itself consists of nearly 500 islets. From this spot, the various excursions to the more distant points were made to radiate. How many wrecks had this archipelago witnessed? among them, that of the *Antilope*, in 1793, that of the American Captain Barnard on Mortz and Lord North Islands in 1832, and so many others!

All this time the devotion of the crew was beyond all praise. No man ever cast a thought on the perils or the fatigues of this cruise among numberless rocks, through narrow passes, the beds of which were covered with coral growths. And now the stormy season was beginning to



THEY VENTURED FORTH THROUGH MAGNIFICENT FORESTS (*p.* 107).

disturb these seas, where the winds rage with such terrible fury, and cause, to this day, so many disasters.

Each day the ship's boats searched every creek into which the currents might have thrown some of the wreck. The men were of course fully armed whenever they landed, for theirs was not like the expedition undertaken in search of Admiral Franklin, on the desert lands of the Arctic countries. These isles were inhabited for the most part ; and Captain Ellis's task consisted above all in maneuvering, as did Entrecasteaux when he searched the *attolons* where Laperouse was supposed to have been lost. The chief point for them was to get into communication with the natives ; and they often met with opposition on the part of those people, who are anything but friendly to strangers. Many a time the islanders proved aggressive and should needs be repulsed by force. Two or three seamen even were wounded, but luckily without any fatal results.

It was from this archipelago of the Carolines that Captain Ellis was able to send his first letters to Mrs. Branican, by some ships bound for the American coast. But they contained no news about the *Franklin* or the survivors. The fruitless search was going to be continued in the west, and would cover the vast group of the Malay Islands. There, in reality, the chances of finding the survivors of the catastrophe were more serious.

Seven hundred miles farther to the west of the Carolines, on the 2d of December, one of the largest of the Philippine Islands was reached, the most important in the Malay archipelago ; nay, the most important of any as yet ascertained by geographers either in the Malay system or even throughout the whole extent of Oceania. This group, discovered by Magellan in 1521, stretches from the fifteenth to the twenty-first degree of latitude north and from the 114th to the 123d of longitude east.

The *Dolly's Hope* did not call at Luzon, an important

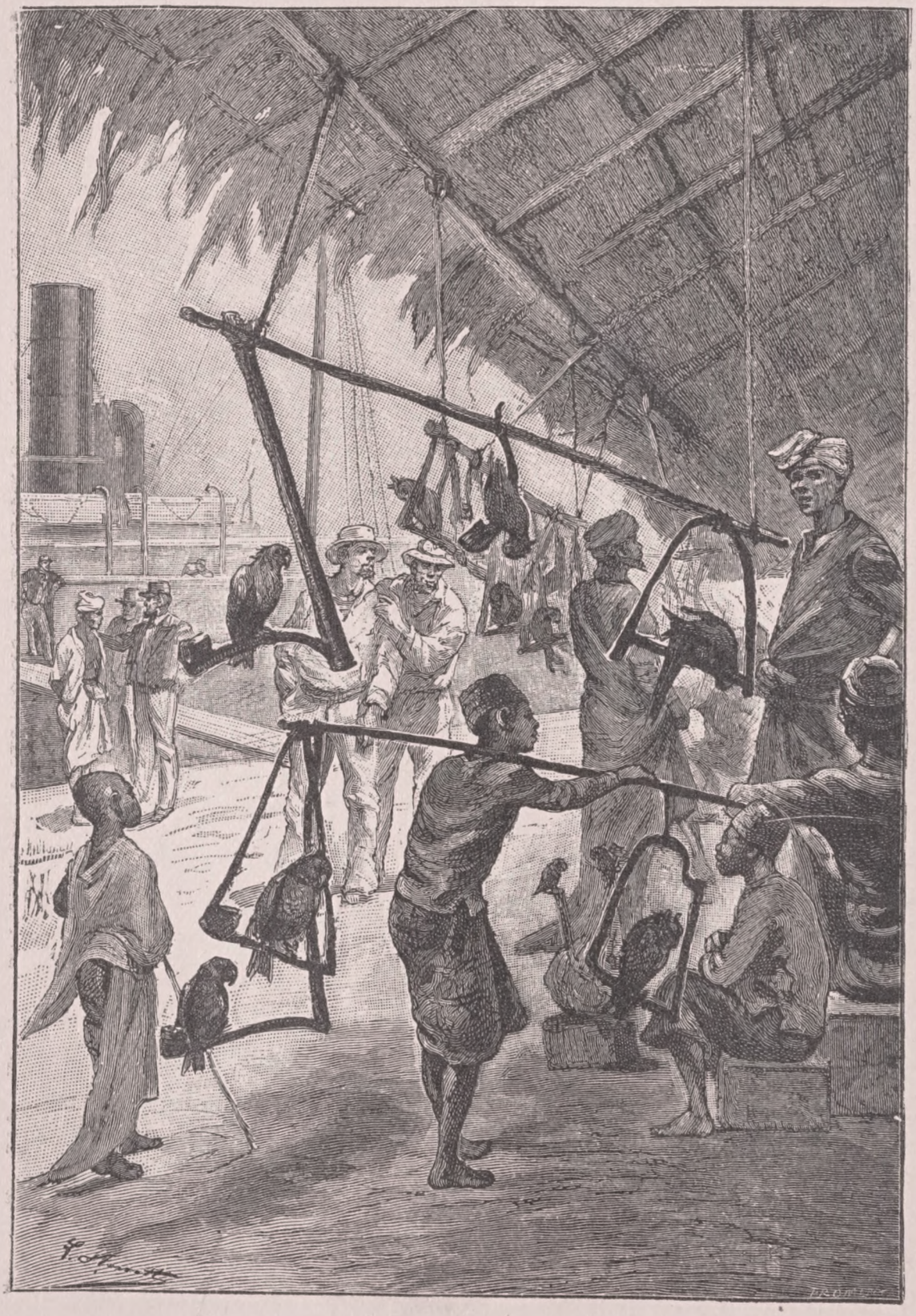
island bearing also the name of Manilla. How could the *Franklin* have sailed so high up in the Chinese seas when her course lay to Singapore? More judicious did Captain Ellis deem it to establish his rallying center at Mindanao Island, south of the said archipelago, a point which John Branican must needs have passed, on his way to the Sea of Java.

She was now lying off the southwest coast, in the harbor of Zamboanga, the residence of the governor-in-chief, from whom depend the three districts into which the island is divided.

Mindanao contains two distinct parts, the one Spanish, the other independent, under the rule of a "soulthan," who has made Selangan his residence.

It was obvious that the governor and the district administrators should be applied to from the first, regarding a wreck which might possibly have taken place on the coast of Mindanao; and these officials readily placed themselves at Captain Ellis's disposal; but no maritime disaster, at least in the Spanish portion of Mindanao, had been reported for five years past.

True, along the coast of the independent half of the island, inhabited by Mindanos, Caragos, Loutas, Soubanis, and various other savage tribes, very strongly suspected of cannibalism, many a disaster might have taken place unknown to the authorities, for it is to the interest of the natives to keep such events secret. You even meet Malays in these parts who openly fly the pirate's flag. With their light vessels, armed with falconets, they chase any merchant ships that may be driven toward their coast by the westerly winds, and when they obtain possession of them their first care is to break them up. Had the *Franklin* been doomed to such a fate, the governor would assuredly never have heard of it. The only information he was able to give regarding his own jurisdiction was therefore deemed insufficient.



OVER A HUNDRED ISLANDS HAD BEEN VISITED (*p.* 107).

And accordingly the *Dolly's Hope* had to brave these seas, so terrible during the winter season. Many a time a landing was effected on various points on the coast and the sailors ventured forth through those magnificent forests of tamarinds, bamboos, mangroves, black ebony trees, wild mahogany and iron-wood trees, the wealth of the Philippines. In the midst of fertile tracts, where the products of temperate zones as well as those of the tropics luxuriate side by side, they came across certain villages where they hoped they might discover some indication of a wreck, perchance some castaway held in captivity by the Malay tribes ; but the same ill success tracked their steps in every direction, and they needs should return to Zamboanga, greatly tried by the rough weather, and having escaped but by a miracle the submarine reefs of these seas.

The exploration of the Philippines did not last less than two months and a half ; over a hundred islands had been visited, chief among which, after Luzon and Mindanao, are Mindoro, Leyte, Samar, Panay, Negros, Zebu, Masbate, Palawan, Catanduanès, etc.

Next, the Bassilan group, south of Zamboanga, was searched, and then our party made for the Archipelago of Holo, which was reached on the 25th of February, 1880.

Here was a very nest of pirates, swarming with natives, in the middle of jungle-covered islands, which are scattered between the southern extremity of Mindanao and the north of Borneo. One single port alone is sometimes visited by ships crossing the Chinese Sea and the Malay basins, the port of Bevouan, which gave its name to the whole group.

In this port the *Dolly's Hope* cast anchor. Communications were entered into with the "soulthan" and the "datous," who govern a population of some 6000 or 7000 inhabitants; and, in return for liberal presents, both in money and kind, the natives told of several wrecks that had taken place on the belt of corals and Madrepores around

their islands. But amid the débris which were collected, none were recognized that could have belonged to the *Franklin.* In any case, the crews had perished or returned home.

The stock of coal taken in at Mindanao had been considerably reduced during the meandering voyage through the Holo group. There was enough remaining, however, to cross the Celebes Sea and reach the port of Bandger Massing, to the south of Borneo.

This basin resembles a huge lake, inclosed on one side by the larger Malay islands, on another by a belt of islets. Still, despite these natural defenses, the Celebes Sea is but badly protected against the fury of the tempests, and if one may indulge in the praises of its gorgeous waters, alive with brightly colored zoöphytes and myriads of mollusks, if the imagination of navigators has gone so far as to compare it to a "bed of liquid flowers," the typhoons which ravage it cast a lurid shade on this glowing picture.

Too true did this prove for the *Dolly's Hope* during the night of February 28–29. Throughout the day the wind had been high, and although it had somewhat subsided toward evening, dark clouds, lowering on the horizon, foretold a troubled night.

And sure enough, by eleven o'clock the storm had risen once more, and in a very short time the billows broke loose with truly appalling violence.

The captain, justly alarmed for the machinery of his steamer, took measures at once to prevent any mishap that might compromise his expedition.

In spite of this, however, the tornado grew so terrific, the ocean unfurled its waves with such rage, that now and again the *Dolly's Hope* was powerless to avoid the full force of the tempest. In a few lurches, some hundred tons of water were shipped, which broke on the deck, dashed the hoods to pieces, and collected in the hold. Fortunately the water-

tight compartments stood the shock and prevented the flood from deluging the furnace and the machinery. This was providential, for, with her fires out, the steamer would have become the helpless prey of the elements, and no longer answering her helm, rolling in the hollow of the waves, and battered on her side by the on-rushing sea, her ultimate fate would have left little room for doubt.

The crew displayed as much composure as bravery under these critical circumstances, and nobly seconded the captain and his officers. Worthy indeed did they show themselves of the commander who had selected them out of the *élite* of San Diego sailors; and to the skill and precision of the maneuvers the saving of the ship was due.

After fifteen hours, a change came at last over the face of the sea; its fury abated almost suddenly, as the *Dolly's Hope* neared the large island of Borneo, and in the morning of the 2d of March, she sighted the Maratouba Islands.

These islands, which, geographically speaking, are dependencies of Borneo, were the objects of the most minute exploration during the first fortnight of this month. Thanks to presents lavished with a liberal hand, the chieftains lent their aid to the explorers, but failed to put them on the track of any information regarding the missing ship. As these regions, however, are but too often scoured by pirates, it was not impossible that John Branican and his men might have been murdered to the very last.

This was the topic of conversation one day between the captain and his second officer.

"After all," remarked the former, "the *Franklin* might very well have perished in an encounter of this kind, and that would explain how we never found any sign of a wreck. These pirates are not likely to boast of their doings; when a ship disappears the thing is credited to a typhoon, and there is an end of it."

"I am sure that's but too true," was the answer. "There

is no lack of those pirates about here, and we shall have to be more watchful than ever when we go down Macassar Strait."

"Of course," replied the captain; "but we are better off than John Branican was. With irregular and changeable winds, a sailing vessel does not always go where she would like to; while with us, as long as our machinery keeps in order, no Malay boat will overtake us, I'm thinking. Still we must keep a sharp lookout."

It was not long until they entered this Strait of Macassar, which separates Borneo from the whimsically outlined coast of the Celebes Island. Coal was shipped at Damaring, and for two months—from the 15th of March to the 15th of May—all the creeks were searched up and down the east coast of the strait.

This Celebes Island, discovered by Magellan, is not less than fifty miles long and six miles wide. Its contour is such that some geographers have compared it in shape to a tarentula, the legs of which would be represented by peninsulas. The beauty of its landscapes, the richness of its products, the happy distribution of its mountains, make it the rival of Borneo. But the numberless indentations on its coasts offer so many safe shelters to pirates that the strait is truly dangerous for navigators.

As she drew nearer to the northern extremity of the strait the *Dolly's Hope* sailed on under somewhat less alarming conditions, this part of the island being under Dutch dominion. The capital of the Dutch possessions is Macassar, formerly called Wlaardingen, defended by the fort of Rotterdam. It was there that Captain Ellis lay to, on the 17th of May, to give his crew a little rest and take in a provision of fuel. Unable though he was to find out anything concerning John Branican, he gathered at this port an important piece of information regarding the course which the *Franklin* must have followed; for, under date

THE TORNADO GREW TERRIFIC (*p.* 108).

of May 3, 1875, this vessel had been signaled ten miles off Macassar, making for the Sea of Java. It was therefore beyond doubt that she had not perished in these terrible Malay seas. It was, farther, beyond Celebes and Borneo, that is in the Sea of Java, that her traces should be looked for, on the way to Singapore.

In a letter which he wrote to Mrs. Branican from this point, the captain advised her of this circumstance, and renewed his promise to acquaint her with the progress of his explorations, henceforth to be carried on between the Sea of Java and the Sunda Islands.

For, naturally, it was advisable that the *Dolly's Hope* should not go beyond the meridian of Singapore, which would be the final point of her campaign to the west.

Accordingly, she left Macassar on the 23d of July, crossed the lower portion of the strait between Celebes Island and Borneo, and cast anchor at Bandger-Massing. This is the residence of the governor of Borneo, or, to give it its real geographical name, of Kalematan. Here the marine registers were carefully gone through, but no mention of the *Franklin* could be discovered. After all, this was not to be wondered at, in the event of the ship having kept out in the high sea.

Ten days later, the course having been altered to the southwest, the port of Batavia was reached, at the extremity of that long island of Java of essentially volcanic origin, and almost always overtopped with the glaring light of its craters.

A few days sufficed to renew the ship's provisions in this important city, the capital of the Dutch possessions in Australia. The governor-general, who had been acquainted by his maritime correspondents with Mrs. Branican's endeavors, gave Captain Ellis a gracious welcome, but had no item of information to offer him. At this time, the general opinion among the seamen of Batavia was that the American

three-master had been disabled in some tornado and had foundered with all on board. Several vessels were quoted, which had disappeared in 1875, and which must have gone down in that manner, for no vestige of them had ever been brought ashore by the currents.

On leaving Batavia, the *Dolly's Hope*, passing the Sunda Strait on her larboard, came on to the islands of Billitow and Bangha. Time was when the neighborhood of these isles was infested with pirates, and ships which frequented these parts to take cargoes of iron and tin had no little trouble to escape them. But the maritime police had at last succeeded in driving them away, and there was no reason to believe that the *Franklin* and her crew had perished at their hands.

Now journeying northwest, and visiting the islands off the coast of Sumatra, the gallant steamer cleared the peninsula of Malacca and anchored off the Island of Singapore on the 29th of June, after being delayed by contrary winds.

Repairs to her machinery obliged Captain Ellis to remain for a whole fortnight in the port situated to the south of the island. Of small dimensions,—only 270 square miles,—this possession, so important by its commercial intercourse with Europe and America, has become one of the richest in the far East, since the day when the English founded their first agency there in 1818.

It will be remembered it was at Singapore that the *Franklin* was to deliver a portion of her cargo before proceeding to Calcutta, and we know likewise that nothing had been heard of her in that port. However, Captain Ellis availed himself of his stay to make inquiries about the various disasters that were known to have occurred in the Sea of Java for several years past.

For, in truth, since on the one hand the *Franklin* had been sighted off Macassar, and on the other she had not reached Singapore, the conclusion imposed itself that she

TAKING IN A STOCK OF COAL (*p.* 108).

had been wrecked between these two points, unless, indeed, she had left the Sea of Java and passed one of the straits which separate the islands of Sunda, to make her way toward the Sea of Timor. But why would she have done so, since she was bound for Singapore? The thing would be incomprehensible; it was clearly out of the question.

His inquiries having given none but negative results, Captain Ellis now took leave of the governor of Singapore to turn his vessel's stem homeward, to America.

Very stormy weather attended his departure on the 25th of August. The heat was excessive, as it usually is in the month of August at this point of the torrid zone, lying a few degrees only below the equator. And during the last days of the month the *Dolly's Hope* was severely tried by the elements. Yet not one of the many islets of the Sunda was left unexplored. Then in immediate succession came Madura, one of the twenty regencies of Java; Bali, one of the most commercial of these centers; Lambok and Sumbava, then threatened with as disastrous an eruption of its volcano at Tombavo as that of 1815.

Between those islands are so many straits leading into the Timor Sea; here the navigator must be cautious indeed to avoid the currents, the force of which carries ships along even against the monsoon from the west. What difficulties beset the course of sailing vessels may be readily understood, and hence the catastrophes that are so frequent within the Malay zone.

Past the Island of Flores the search was pursued,—still and ever uselessly,—along the other islands which lie south of the sea of the Moluccas. What wonder if, after so many disappointments, our crew felt keenly the failure of their expedition! All hope should not be abandoned, however, until this expedition was brought to an end. Perchance, instead of going down the Strait of Macassar, on leaving Mindanao, Captain Branican had crossed the

archipelago and the sea of the Moluccas to reach the Java Sea.

Meanwhile, time went on, and the log-book was still silent regarding the fate of the *Franklin.* Neither at Timor, nor in the three groups which constitute the archipelago of the Moluccas, in the group of Amboin, the residence of the governor-general in Banda, or in the Gilolo group, was it possible to hear any tidings of a ship lost anywhere about these isles in the spring of 1875. Between the 23d of September, when they had left Timor, and the 27th of December, when they had reached Gilolo, three whole months had been spent in anxious inquiries, with the sympathetic assistance of the Dutch islanders, and not a glimmer of light had been thrown on the disaster.

The voyage of the *Dolly's Hope* had reached its furthest limits. Gilolo, the most important of the Moluccas, was the last in that belt of islands which Captain Ellis had undertaken to follow up around the Malay region. The crew took a few days' rest, to which they were well entitled. And yet, had any fresh indication been forthcoming, what would not the noble souls have gladly attempted even in the face of greater dangers still !

Ternate, the capital of Gilolo Island, the key to the Molucca Sea, and the residence of a Dutch governor, supplied the *Dolly's Hope* with all the provisions and fuel she would need for her trip homeward ; and here they saw the close of the year 1881, the sixth year since the disappearance of Captain Branican.

On the morning of the 9th of January, the *Dolly's Hope* steamed out of Gilolo and was soon lost to view, away to the northeast.

The bad season was at its height, however. Painfully she labored onward ; contrary winds often caused her considerable delays, and it was only on the 23d of February that she was signaled by the semaphores of San Diego.

This Malay expedition had lasted nineteen months, and despite the efforts of Captain Ellis, despite the devotion of his crew, the secret of the *Franklin* lay buried still in the depths of the seas.

CHAPTER XII.

ANOTHER YEAR GOES BY.

THE letters received by Mrs. Branican from the exploring party, made her very dubious of its ultimate result; she had but little hope that Captain Ellis's efforts in the vicinity of the Moluccas would prove successful.

As soon as the *Dolly's Hope* was signaled off San Diego, the poor woman, accompanied by William Andrew, went to the port, and both were on board almost before the steamer had been safely anchored.

The attitude of Captain Ellis and his crew told plainly enough that the second portion of their voyage had been as fruitless as the first.

After holding out her hand to the captain, Mrs. Branican turned toward the men, so severely tried by the hardships of this voyage, and said in a firm voice :

"I thank you, Captain Ellis ; I thank you, my friends ! You have done all I possibly could expect from you. You did not succeed, and perhaps you despair of ever doing so. I do not despair ! No, I do not give up yet the hope of seeing John and his companions of the *Franklin* again ! My hope is in God ! God will realize it !"

These words were pronounced with such an extraordinary assurance, they showed such uncommon energy, they said so eloquently that the speaker would never yield, that her faith ought to have passed into the hearts of all. But, although she was listened to with all the respect she was entitled to, there was not one who did not believe that the *Franklin* and her crew were irretrievably lost.

And yet it might have been better, perhaps, to believe in that special intuition with which woman is naturally endowed. Whereas man is guided only by the direct observation of facts and by the consequences thereof, it is certain that woman has not unfrequently a more accurate apprehension of the future through her intuitive faculties. It is a sort of natural instinct that guides her, and gives her a certain foreknowledge of things. Who knew but Mrs. Branican might yet be found right one day, contrary to the general opinion?

Mr. Andrew and she then went into the cabin of the *Dolly's Hope*, where Captain Ellis gave them a detailed account of his expedition. By means of maps of Polynesia and the Malay seas spread on the table, they were able to follow the course taken by the steamer, the different places it had stopped at and explored, the observations taken in the principal ports and the native villages, the searches made among the islands and islets, with minute patience and indefatigable zeal.

Then the captain added, in conclusion :

" Allow me, Mrs. Branican, to draw your special attention to this : the *Franklin* was seen for the last time at a point south of Celebes, on May 3, 1875, about seven weeks after her leaving San Diego, and since that day she has been seen nowhere. Now, as she did not reach Singapore, it is beyond doubt that the disaster took place in the Java Sea. Why ? There are but two suppositions. The first is, that the ship either went down in a storm or was sunk by a collision, without leaving a single vestige behind. The second is, that she ran on some rocks or that she was destroyed by Malay pirates, and in these latter cases it would have been possible to find some remnants of her. Now, in spite of our explorations, we have been unable to find any material proof of the destruction of the *Franklin*."

The evident conclusion of this argument was that it

appeared more logical to adopt the first supposition—the one which attributed the loss of the good ship to the fury of the tornadoes so frequent in those parts. As to the second case, that of a collision, as it very seldom happens that one of two colliding vessels does not remain afloat, the secret of the collision would have been known sooner or later. It was idle, therefore, to entertain any more hope.

The force of the argument had been duly felt by Mr. Andrew, and he bowed his head sadly beneath Mrs. Branican's inquiring glance.

"No!" said she. "In spite of all, no! The *Franklin* has not gone down! No! John and his crew are not lost!"

The discussion was resumed at Dolly's desire and Captain Ellis had to detail the most minute particulars. Over and over again she would cover the same ground, questioning, discussing, in her unyielding way.

This conversation lasted for three hours, and when Mrs. Branican took leave of Captain Ellis, he asked her if it was her intention to have the *Dolly's Hope* laid over.

"By no means, Captain," was the sharp reply; "and I should be very sorry if you or your crew had any thought of leaving her. How can we tell but some new indication may lead us to undertake another expedition? So, if you would care to keep the command of the ship——"

"It would give me great pleasure," replied Captain Ellis. "But I belong to the Andrew firm, madam, and my services might be needed."

"Let not that hinder you, my dear Ellis," said his employer. "I will be happy to see you stay under Dolly's orders, since such is her wish."

"That being so, I remain in her service, sir. Neither my crew nor myself will leave the *Dolly's Hope*."

"And I beg of you, Captain," said Mrs. Branican, "to see that she is always ready to put off to sea at any time!"

When giving his consent, the shipowner had no other thought than that of complying with Dolly's desires. But both Captain Ellis and himself were under the belief that she would not contemplate a second expedition, when the first had been so unsuccessful. If time was to prove powerless to deaden the memory of the catastrophe, it would surely destroy every remnant of hope, in the long run.

So, according to Mrs. Branican's wish, the *Dolly's Hope* was not laid aside. Captain Ellis and his men remained on the muster-roll and continued to receive their pay, just as though they were at sea. There were in truth important repairs to be made : after nineteen months rough cruising in Malay seas the hull should go through the careening dock, the rigging had to be partly renewed, the boilers to be replaced, certain parts of the machinery to be exchanged. Then, when this work was over, the *Dolly's Hope* took aboard her provisions and her supply of coal and was in readiness to put to sea at a moment's notice.

Mrs. Branican had resumed her former life at Prospect House, seeing no one but Mr. Andrew and Captain Ellis. She lived alone with her recollections and her hopes, alone with the thought of the double misfortune that had befallen her. Little Wat would have been seven years old now,—the age at which the first glimmer of intelligence brightens up the youthful brain, then so impressionable,—and little Wat was no more! Then, at times, her thought would wander off to him who risked his life for her, that Zach Fren whom she was so desirous of meeting, and who had not returned to San Francisco yet. But it would not be long now before he did so. Several times the maritime news had contained tidings of the *Californian*, and no doubt the year 1881 would not end before she was back in her own port. On her arrival Mrs. Branican would send for the sailor, and would at last discharge her debt of gratitude

toward him and relieve him of all anxiety for his future welfare.

In the meantime, the families, so sorely tried by the loss of the *Franklin*, continued to be the object of her care. It was for the sole purpose of visiting their humble homes and proferring her affectionate help to them that she ever left Prospect House and went down to the lower part of the town. Her generosity showed itself under all forms, and reached the moral as well as the material needs of her *protégés*. It was during the first months of this year that she consulted William Andrew on a project she longed to put into execution.

It was the founding of a home for abandoned children and little orphans, which she wished to bestow on San Diego.

"Mr. Andrew," said she, "it is in memory of our child that I want to devote myself to this institution, and to endow it with the necessary resources for its maintenance. I have no doubt but John will approve of it on his return. And to what better use could we put our fortune?"

Mr. Andrew having no objection to make, at once placed himself at her disposal, to take the necessary steps for the erection of an establishment of this kind. One hundred and fifty thousand dollars were to be devoted to it, first for the purchasing of a suitable building, then for the annual expenditure of the various departments.

This plan was rapidly realized, thanks to the co-operation given to the good foundress by the city. It happened, too, that there was no need of building. A vast edifice was bought in a healthy locality, on the slope of the old town. A skillful architect made this building suitable for its new purpose, and arranged it in such a way as to be able to accommodate fifty children, with a staff sufficient to bring them up, care for them, and instruct them. Surrounded by an immense garden, sheltered with fine old trees, and

watered by running streams, it offered, as far as hygiene is concerned, every condition required by experience.

On May 19th this home—which received the name of Wat House—was inaugurated amid the applause of her grateful fellow-citizens, who would fain on this occasion have expressed to Mrs. Branican all the depth and sincerity of their sympathy; but nothing had induced her to appear at the opening ceremony, or even to leave her cottage on that day. No sooner, however, had a certain number of children been received at Wat House, than she went there every day to see them as though she had been their own mother. These children might remain in the home until they reached the age of twelve. As soon as their age would allow it, they were taught to read and write, and a good moral and religious education was imparted to them, at the same time as they were trained for whatever trade their aptitude indicated. Some of them, belonging to seafaring families, who showed a liking for the sea, were engaged as cabin boys or apprentices. And, truth to tell, it seemed as if Dolly had a more personal affection for these, no doubt in remembrance of Captain John.

At the end of the year 1881, no news had been received of the *Franklin* at San Diego, or indeed anywhere else. Although considerable rewards had been offered to whoever would discover the slightest clew, not a word had been heard to induce the sending off of the *Dolly's Hope* on a second voyage. And yet Mrs. Branican still hoped on. What 1881 had not done for her, perhaps 1882 would do!

As to Mr. and Mrs. Burker, what had become of them? Where had Len Burker flown to escape the hands of justice; As the U. S. police had at last given up looking for him, Mrs. Branican could not now hope to ascertain what had become of Jane.

And yet, her ignorance of her dear cousin's whereabouts was a source of great distress to her. She was surprised

CAPTAIN ELLIS GAVE A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF HIS EXPEDITION (*p.* 116).

she had never received a single letter from Jane—a letter she would easily have been able to send, without compromising her husband's safety. Were they both unaware that Dolly, now in the full enjoyment of her faculties, had sent a ship in search of her husband and that this expedition had been fruitless? Had not the newspapers of both worlds followed the different phases of this enterprise, and could it be imagined that neither Len nor Jane Burker had heard about it? They could not but know likewise that Mrs. Branican had become rich through the death of her uncle Edward Starter, and that she was in a position to help them! And, still, neither of them had made an attempt at entering into correspondence with her, precarious as their position must needs be.

January, February, March, had already gone, and it seemed the year 1882 was to bring no change in the state of things, when an event happened which seemed to throw some light on the mystery of the *Franklin*.

On March 27 the steamer *Californian*, with Zach Fren on board, dropped anchor in the Bay of San Francisco, after a cruise of several years over the several seas of Europe.

As soon as Mrs. Branican heard of the vessel's return, she wrote to the sailor, who was now boatswain of his ship, asking him to come to her at once at San Diego.

It just happened to be Zach's intention to take a few months' rest in his native town, and so he answered that as soon as he could he would be off to San Diego, and his first visit would be to Prospect House. A few days more and he would be there.

But at the same time a rumor spread about, likely to create a sensation throughout the United States, did it turn out to be true.

It was reported that the *Californian* had picked up a piece of a wreck, supposed to have belonged to the *Franklin*. A San Francisco newspaper added, that the *Californian* had

found this plank north of Australia, between the Timor Sea and the Arafoura Sea, off the island of Melville, west of the Torres Strait.

When this report reached San Diego, William Andrew and Captain Ellis, who had been informed of it by telegram, hastened to Prospect House.

At the first word she heard, Mrs. Branican grew very pale, but, with that tone which bespoke her absolute conviction, she said :

"After the plank, the *Franklin* will be found, and after the *Franklin*, we will find John and his companions!"

In reality, the picking up of this plank was an event of some importance.

It was the first time that any débris of the lost ship had been found. In her search after the scene of the disaster, Mrs Branican now possessed one link of that chain which bound the present with the past.

Immediately she had a map of Oceanica spread out before them. Then Mr. Andrew and Captain Ellis had to study the question of undertaking a new expedition, as she would have it settled on the spot.

"So, the *Franklin's* course toward Singapore would not seem to have lain through the Philippines and the Malay Sea," began Mr. Andrew.

"That is improbable—it is impossible," asserted Captain Ellis.

"Yet," continued the shipowner, "if she followed that course, how is it this plank was picked up in the Arafoura Sea, north of Melville Island?"

"I cannot explain, I cannot understand it myself, Mr. Andrew," replied the captain. "All I know is, that the *Franklin* was seen southwest of the Celebes after leaving Macassar Strait. Now, why she went through this strait is evidently because she came from the north and not the east. She could not therefore have entered the Torres Strait!"

. . . AS THOUGH SHE HAD BEEN THEIR OWN MOTHER (*p.* 120).

This matter was argued for a long time and finally the captain's opinion seemed to carry more weight with it.

Mrs. Branican listened to the objections and the answers given, without saying a word. But her knitted brow showed with what tenacity, with what stubbornness, she still refused to admit the loss of John and his crew. No! she would not believe it until she had positive proof of their death!

"Very well," said Mr. Andrew, "I agree with you, my dear Ellis, that the *Franklin* must have crossed the Java Sea on her way to Singapore."

"A part of it, at least, sir, seeing that it is only between Singapore and the Celebes that the wreck could have occurred."

"Very well, I say. But how did that plank drift into Australian waters, if the ship was wrecked on any rock in the Java Sea?"

"That can be explained in one way only," the seaman replied: "by admitting that this plank may have been carried through the Sunda Strait or one or the other of the straits separating these islands from the Timor and the Arafoura seas."

"Do the currents flow in that direction?"

"Certainly, sir; and I may add, that if the *Franklin* was disabled in some storm, she may have been swept through one of these straits, and finally broken to pieces on the rocks to the north of the Australian coast."

"Quite true, my dear Ellis," acquiesced Mr. Andrew, "that is the only plausible explanation; and that being so, if a plank was picked up off Melville Island, six years after the wreck, it must be that it has only lately been washed off the rocks on which the *Franklin* was dashed!"

This was a supposition that no sailor would have argued against.

Mrs. Branican, whose gaze was still riveted on the map before her, then said:

"Since it is probable that the ship was thrown on the Australian coast, and since the survivors have not reappeared, it must be that they have been taken prisoners by some of the native tribes."

"As to that, Dolly, it is not impossible—and yet——" replied Mr. Andrew.

Mrs. Branican was about to enter an energetic protest against any doubt Mr. Andrew might throw upon her suggestion, when Captain Ellis thought it his duty to say:

"Why, we have yet to know if the plank picked up by the *Californian* really did belong to the *Franklin.*"

"Do you doubt it?" asked Dolly.

"We shall soon have our minds made up on that point," said the shipowner, "for I have ordered the plank to be sent on to us."

"And I," added Mrs. Branican, "I hereby order the *Dolly's Hope* to be got in readiness to sail at once!"

Three days after this conversation had taken place, the boatswain, Zach Fren, who had just arrived in San Diego, called at Prospect House.

Now thirty-seven years of age, vigorous and of resolute appearance, with a sunburnt face and an open and happy countenance, he was one of those mariners who inspire confidence to others because they have confidence in themselves, and who are ever ready to go straight whither they are told to go.

The welcome he received from Mrs. Branican bore such an imprint of gratitude, that the gallant sailor hardly knew how to reply.

"My friend," said she to him, after the first outbreak of her emotion, "it is you—you who saved my life; you who did all in your power to save my poor child. What can I do for you?"

The boatswain denied having done anything but his duty! Any sailor who would not have done as much,

would not be a sailor at all! His only regret was that he had not been able to bring up the little one along with the mother! Anyhow, he deserved nothing for that. He thanked Mrs. Branican for her kind feelings toward him. If she would allow him he would come and visit her again while he was ashore."

"I have been awaiting your return, Zach, for a good many years," replied Mrs. Branican, "and I hope you will be near by, the day Captain John comes home."

"The day Captain John comes home, eh?"

"Zach Fren, do you too believe——"

"That Captain John is lost? Bless you, no! Not I!" burst out the boatswain.

"Then—you have hope——"

"I've got no hope at all, Mrs. Branican. I'm jolly sure of it! Do you think an old salt like Captain John goes and gets lost like an old cap in a blast of wind? No fear! Such a thing has never been heard of before!"

What Fren said, and the genuine earnestness which accompanied his words, sent a thrill through Dolly's heart. She was no longer the only one who believed that John would come back. Someone else shared her conviction—and this someone was the man who had saved her life. Surely the hand of Providence was there.

"Thank you, Zach," she said; "Oh, thank you! You do not know the good you have done me! Repeat it over again; tell me again that John has survived the wreck."

"As sure as gun's iron he has, ma'am; and the proof he is alive is that he'll be found one of these days! And if that's not proof enough—there!"

The sailor now was asked all kinds of details on the circumstances in which the plank had been picked up by the *Californian.*

"My friend," Dolly said at last, "I have resolved to send out another searching party immediately."

"That's right—you bet they succeed this time; and I'll be one of them, ma'am, if you will let me!"

"You would be willing to sail under Captain Ellis?"

"With all my heart!"

"Thanks, Zach Fren! It seems to me that with you aboard, the *Dolly's Hope* will have one more chance."

"I should say so, Mrs. Branican!" said the boatswain, a merry twinkle in his eyes. "Yes! I believe you there, and I am ready to set off right away."

Dolly took the sailor's hand and pressed it as she would the hand of a dear friend. Her imagination carried her off, led her astray, perhaps. But it seemed to her as though this man was fated to succeed where others had failed.

However, as Captain Ellis had observed, and although Mrs. Branican's mind was already made up on that subject, it was urgent to ascertain whether the débris brought back by the *Californian* really belonged to the *Franklin.*

This plank, forwarded as we know at Mr. Andrew's request, arrived at San Diego by rail, and was immediately brought to the shipyard. There it was examined by the engineer and the foremen who had superintended the building of the *Franklin.*

This waif, picked up some ten miles off Melville Island, proved to be a portion of the stem, or rather of the carved cutwater usually affixed to the prow of sailing vessels. It had been greatly damaged, not by a long stay in the water, but by exposure to the inclemency of the weather. Thence were drawn the conclusions that it must have remained a long time on the rocks against which the ship had been dashed, that it had become detached from the main part by some cause or another,—probably by the action of the current,—and that it had been floating about for several months or several weeks when it was sighted by the sailors of the *Californian.* As to the ship, was it Captain John's? Yes, for the carvings recognized on this fragment

resembled those which ornamented the cutwater of the *Franklin.*

Such was the opinion arrived at in San Diego. No doubt whatsoever did the builders entertain on the point. The teakwood used for this cutwater had come out of their shipyard. They even found marks of an iron bolt, which fastened the cutwater to the end of the stem, and the remains of a coat of red paint, with a golden border, on the foliage carved on the fore part.

It was but too evident the piece of timber brought back by the *Californian* was part and parcel of Mr. Andrew's ship, so uselessly looked for in the Malay basin.

This point once settled, the explanation suggested by Captain Ellis was more likely than ever : since the *Franklin* had been seen in the Java Sea, southwest of the Celebes Islands, she must of necessity have been carried away, a few days later, through the Sunda Strait, or some other strait opening on the Timor or the Arafoura Sea, and struck against the rocks on the coast of Australia.

The sending off of a vessel to explore the basin contained between the Sunda Islands and the north coast of Australia was therefore entirely justified. Would this expedition succeed any better than the one to the Philippines, Celebes, and Moluccas ? There was reason to hope it would.

This time, Mrs. Branican thought of personally joining the expedition and embarking on the *Dolly's Hope.* But William Andrew and Captain Ellis, with Zach Fren's help, succeeded in dissuading her, though not without difficulty. A voyage of this kind, which might be very long, perhaps, could have been compromised by the presence of a woman on board.

Needless to say that Zach Fren was taken on the *Dolly's Hope* as boatswain, and Captain Ellis made every preparation to set sail with the least possible delay.

CHAPTER XIII.

EXPLORING THE TIMOR SEA.

IT was on the 3d of April, 1882, at ten o'clock in the morning, that the *Dolly's Hope* left the port of San Diego.

Once clear of the coast of America, the gallant ship plowing her way across the broad Pacific, her officers naturally bent their thoughts on that mysterious west to which they were speeding.

"There is no other way I can explain it," remarked the captain for the twentieth time. "The *Franklin* must have been helplessly driven out of her course by the currents. Or else, why would she have turned down into the strait, when she was bound for Singapore, right in the opposite direction?"

"It's a puzzler to me," said the second officer. "If that plank had been picked up in the Indian Sea, we might suppose they were wrecked somewhere on the Sunda Islands, or the west coast of Australia."

"But it's up by Melville Island it was picked up, which means that the *Franklin* went down in the Arafoura Sea close to Torres Strait, or even in the strait itself."

"There might be back currents along the Australian coast that could have driven the plank toward the strait," observed Zach Fren. "If so, the trouble might easily have been in the west of the Arafoura Sea."

"We shall see," replied Captain Ellis. "Meanwhile, let us steer as if the *Franklin* had split on the reefs in Torres Strait."

"And if we steer right," added the boatswain, "you bet we'll find Captain John."

On the whole, this was the best course to adopt; and it was done accordingly.

"THERE IS NO OTHER WAY I CAN EXPLAIN IT . . ." (*p.* 128).

The breadth of this Torres Strait is estimated at some thirty miles. It is hard for those who have not seen it to imagine the multitude of its islets and reefs, the position of which is but approximately set down by the best geographers. There are at least 900, most of them on a level with the water, and the largest not exceeding three or four miles in circumference.

They are inhabited by tribes of Andamens, at whose hands no captain need expect any mercy, as was shown by the massacre of the crews of the *Chesterfield* and the *Hormuzier*. They travel from one islet to the other on their light pirogues, or flying proas, of Malay construction, and thus journey without difficulty from New Guinea to Australia or *vice versa*. If, therefore, Captain John and his men had been cast on one of these rocks, they could easily have reached the coast of Australia and thence made their way homeward. But, as not one of them had given sign of life, the only plausible hypothesis was that they had fallen a prey to the natives; and, as we said, the luckless prisoners of these savage tribes are cruelly butchered, and ultimately devoured, thus leaving behind them no trace of their horrible fate.

Over such topics did Captain Ellis and his men muse and talk on the deck of the *Dolly's Hope*. This must have been the fate of the survivors of the *Franklin*, if she had been wrecked in the Torres Strait. There was, of course, a chance of the ship not having entered the fatal strait; but in that case, how were they to explain the finding of her cutwater off Melville Island?

Fearlessly, though with all due caution, Captain Ellis entered the formidable passes. With a good steamer, watchful officers, a brave and cool-minded crew, he had every hope of getting through this maze of breakers and keeping in awe any natives who might attack him.

When, for some motive or other, a vessel enters into

Torres Strait, its mouth being studded with coral banks on the Pacific side, she naturally prefers hugging the Australian coast ; but, in the south of Papua Gulf, there lay a fair-sized island which our party should needs explore.

The *Dolly's Hope*, accordingly, shaped her course between the two dangerous rocks known as Eastern Fields and Boot Reef. The conformation of the latter, seen from a distance, is not unlike a disabled ship, and a thrill of emotion ran through the men at the thought that they might be face to face with the wreck of the *Franklin ;* this feeling, however, was but of short duration, as they were soon enabled to ascertain that what stood before their eyes was but a fantastic conglomeration of coraliferous masses.

Several canoes, mere trunks of trees hollowed out by burning or with the hatchet, and kept in equilibrium on the water by means of balancing poles, were perceived in the vicinity of Murray Island, paddled by five or six natives. The latter, however, indulged in nothing worse than cries, or rather veritable howls, such as are uttered by wild beasts, and the *Dolly's Hope* was able to finish her trip round the whole island without meeting with any aggression.

Nowhere could the débris of any wreck be discovered ; no living soul on the larger islands or on the islets but swarthy natives, with muscular frames, woolly, red-painted hair, glossy skin, and large but not flattened noses. And here and there, under the cocoa trees, thousands of which luxuriate in these parts, groups of them might be seen brandishing their spears, their bows and arrows, by way of expressing their hostile sentiments to the visitors.

A fresh supply of coal having been taken on board at Somerset port in Northern Australia, Captain Ellis spent a whole month—until the 10th of June—in anxious search between the Gulf of Carpentaria and New Guinea. He called at Mulgrave, Banks, Horn, and Albany islands, at Booby Island, honeycombed with dark caverns, in one of

which has been placed the "letter-box" of the Torres Strait. Here, it may be observed, seafaring people do not call for the sole purpose of leaving their letters, the collection of which is anything but regular, needless to say. A kind of international convention requires the ships of the various trading countries to deposit coals and provisions on this island as they pass by; nor is there any fear of these stores being pillaged by the natives, for the violence of the currents forbids their landing in their frail canoes.

On several occasions, by dint of coaxing them with little presents of no value whatever, our party was enabled to communicate with the mados or chieftains of these isles. They, in their turn, presented the strangers with *Kaisos*, or turtle shells, and *incras*, small shells strung together, which they use as money. Unable to understand a word of their language, or to make themselves understood by them, the sailors found it impossible to ascertain whether they had any knowledge of a wreck the date of which might perchance coincide with the disappearance of the *Franklin*. In any case, the Andamens did not seem to have in their possession any article of American manufacture, be it a weapon or a utensil. Not a piece of iron or woodwork, no fragment of a mast or a spar could be seen that might have come from the breaking up of a ship; and Captain Ellis came away from these parts with the conviction, not indeed that the *Franklin* had not split on the reefs of the strait, but at least that they now bore no trace or sign of such a calamity.

The Arafoura Sea was next to be visited, continuing as it does the Timor Sea, between the girdle of the islets of Sunda on the north, and the Australian coast on the south. As to the Gulf of Carpentaria, it was not thought necessary to explore it, for a wreck along its coasts could not have remained unknown to the settlers of the vicinity. It was, on the contrary, to the Arnheim coast that their

attention should now be turned; then on the homeward journey they would take up the northern portion of the Timor Sea and the numerous passes that lead into it between the islands.

This voyage along the coast of Arnheim, among thousands of islets and reefs, did not occupy less than a month. The minute zeal with which the search was carried on was only equaled by the fearless bravery it brought into play. Still, from the western extremity of the Gulf of Carpentaria away to Van Diemen's Gulf, not a vestige of information was gathered, either from the Australian cannibals (and from them but little was expected) or from the Chinese engaged in the tripang trade on these seas.

On the 11th of July, under the 130th degree of longitude, Captain Ellis commenced his exploration of Melville and Bathurst islands, separated from each other by a somewhat narrow pass. It was within ten miles north of this spot that the *Franklin's* cutwater had been picked up. To explain its having drifted no farther west, it was to be supposed that the currents had loosened it from the reefs a short time only before the arrival of the *Californian*. It was therefore possible that they were now nearing the scene of the catastrophe.

Four months were spent here, visiting not only the two islands, but the Arnheim coast up to Queen's Channel and even to the mouth of the Victoria River.

It had been a hard task to push on into the interior; indeed, the great dangers in perspective did not seem compensated by the slightest hope of success. The tribes frequenting the north of the Australian continent are truly formidable foes, and, at one of the ports at which he had called, our captain had just heard of a recent instance of cannibalism in these parts. The crew of a Dutch boat, the *Groningen*, allured by false demonstrations of friendship on the part of the natives of Bathurst Island, had been mas-

sacred and devoured by those wild beasts—is not this the only designation suited to them?

Yet, if Captain Ellis should entertain no hope of learning when and where the crew of the *Franklin* had fallen into the hands of the savages, he might still be able to find some indication of the wreck itself. And in this thought he was encouraged by the fact that barely eight months had now elapsed since the *Californian* had come across the tale-telling waif, north of Melville Island.

His efforts and those of his worthy crew were therefore directed to each and every bay and creek and reef along this coast, regardless of the toil, or of the perils that beset them. Many a time did the *Dolly's Hope* narrowly escape splitting on invisible or unknown breakers; many a time also had her sailors to use their guns and their hatchets to save her from being attacked or even positively boarded by the natives.

But with no better success did they labor here than they had done in Torres Strait. No result in any shape had been obtained; it was now the 3d of November; what course was yet open?

Did Captain Ellis consider his mission fulfilled, at least in so far as the Australian coast and the dependent islands were concerned? Should he now think of sailing homeward after he had visited the smaller islands of the Sunda in the north of the Timor Sea? In a word, did he feel, in his heart and conscience, he had done all that man could do?

It is easy to understand how the brave sailor hesitated to look upon his task as completed even after pursuing it to the coast of Australia.

A mere incident put an end to his hesitation.

On the morning of the 4th he was pacing the deck abaft, with Zach Fren, when the latter drew his attention to certain objects floating about half a mile from the ship. They

were not logs of wood, broken planks, or trunks of trees, but enormous bundles of yellowish weeds uprooted from the depths of the sea and now following the contours of the coast line.

"That's a strange thing," remarked Fren. "May I be a darky if those weeds don't come from the west, or even the southwest! There must be a current sucking them into that blamed strait!"

"Sure enough," replied the captain; "it must be some local current flowing east, unless it be the backing of the tide."

"I don't believe it is, for, now I think of it, at break of day this morning I saw more of those weeds on that very same tack."

"Are you sure, friend?"

"As sure as I am that we'll find Captain John some day yet."

"And if that current is there, might not the *Franklin's* cutwater have drifted from the west along the coast of the continent just like those weeds?"

"Just what I'm thinking, Captain."

"That settles that point, Zach. We must keep on searching the coast, right through the Timor Sea, and on to the farthest point of Western Australia."

The second officer was called up and consulted on the advisability of sailing farther westward.

He was of opinion that the very existence of this local current ordered them to push on at least as far as where the current began.

"Well, then, set her west," said the captain. "*May-bes*, and *perhaps*, and the like won't do; we must have something definite to bring home to San Diego, and that is the certainty that there is nothing left of the *Franklin*, if it be that she was lost on this coast!"

And accordingly the *Dolly's Hope* went back to Timor

Island to renew her stock of coal; then, after a stay of forty-eight hours, she retraced her course toward Cape Londonderry, at the extremity of Western Australia.

On leaving Queen's Channel, all efforts were made to follow all the contours of the continent from Turtle Point as close as possible. Here the course of the current from west to east was evident to the eye. It was not one of those tidal waves that change with the ebb and the flow, but a permanent streaming of the waters in the direction just stated. There was good cause, therefore, to sail up this current at least as far as the limit of the Indian Ocean, as suggested by the second officer.

At the mouth of the Gulf of Cambridge, which bathes the foot of Mount Cockburn, Captain Ellis deemed it imprudent to venture with his ship into this wedge-shaped funnel, bristling with breakers and frequented by none but cannibals. The steam sloop, with half a dozen well-armed men, under command of Zach Fren, was therefore sent alone into the gulf.

"It is very plain," remarked the captain, "that if Branican and his men fell into the claws of these brutes, we cannot expect any of them to have escaped; but what we must know is whether there are still any remnants of the *Franklin*, in the event of the natives having broken her up in this gulf of theirs."

"They are none too good for that, I guess," answered the boatswain.

His mission had been clearly laid out for him, and he carried it out with the utmost zeal and circumspection. But having gone as far as Adolphus Island, almost the farthest point in the gulf inland, and sailed round it, he discovered nothing to induce him to push on farther.

The *Dolly's Hope* resumed her course therefore, past Cape Dussejour, and on to the northeast, always hugging the coast of Western Australia. The islands here, also, are numerous,

and the bays and creeks carved out in many a capricious zigzag, but neither at Cape Rhuliers nor at Cape Londonderry did the never-failing intrepidity of the noble crews meet with any reward.

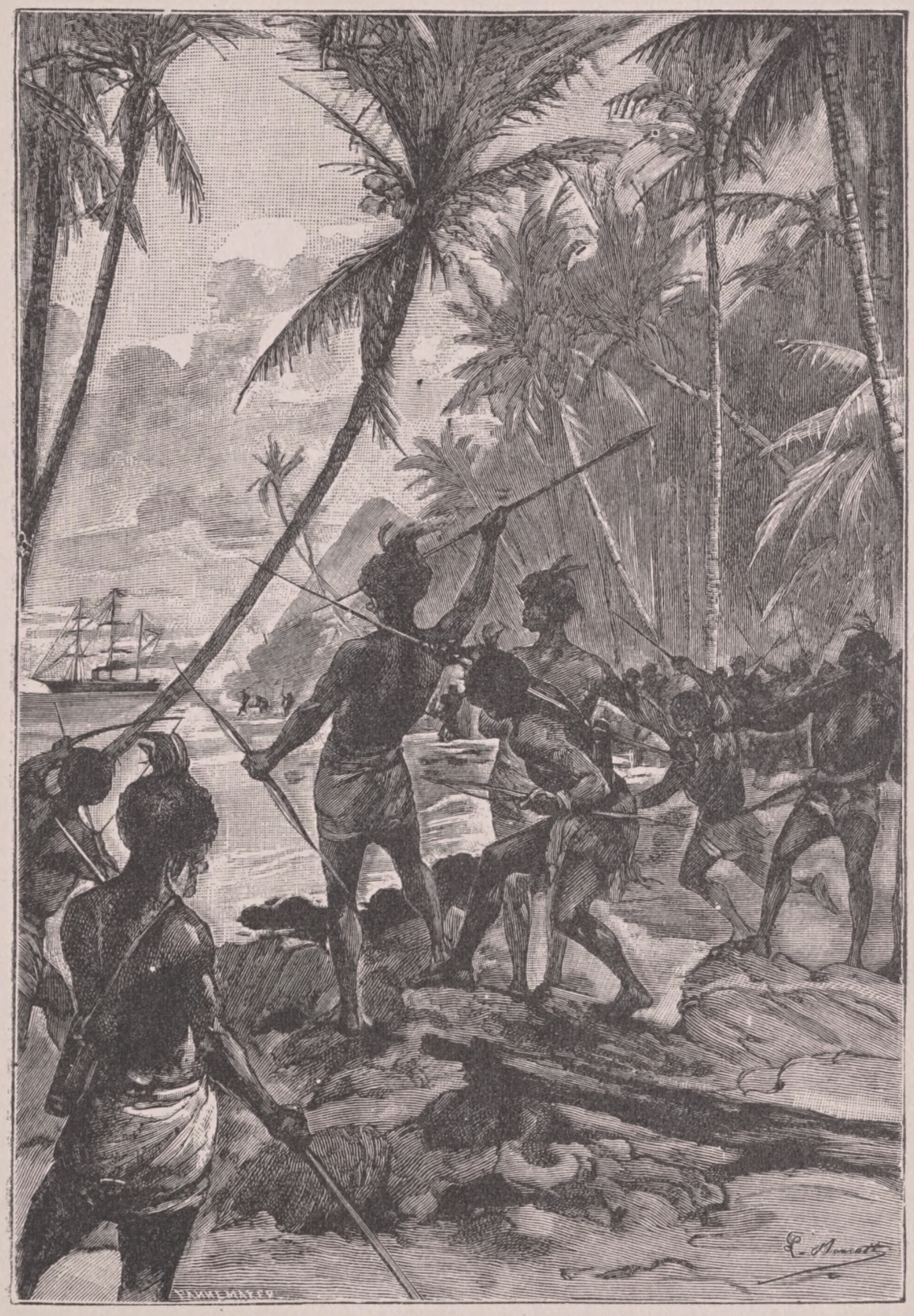
Nor had they experienced the full measure of their fatigues and dangers until they cleared Cape Londonderry. From that point, the coast is exposed directly to the mighty blows of the Indian Ocean, and few indeed are the available spots where a ship in distress might seek a shelter from the billows. Now a steamer is always and ever at the mercy of her machinery, and it may break down when she pitches and rolls and battles with a raging sea.

The numberless islets, reefs, and shallows our sailors encountered between this promontory and Collier Bay, in the York Sund and in Brunswick Bay, painfully reminded them of Torres Strait.

At Talbot and Bougainville capes, the surf is such that the coast is positively inaccessible save to the native canoes, rendered well-nigh uncapsizable by their balancing poles. Admiralty Bay, between Cape Bougainville and Cape Voltaire, is so thickly strewn with breakers that the steam sloop was more than once on the point of being lost. And still our sailors plodded on with a courage and pluck truly worthy of a better fate.

And now Captain Ellis ventured forth through the Buccaneer Archipelago, intending to go no farther than Cape Lévêque, the utmost limit of the King Sund, to the northeast.

Not, indeed, that the climate caused him any anxiety ; on the contrary, each day brought an improvement in this respect. In this part of the Indian Ocean, lying in the Austral hemisphere, the months of October and November correspond to the months of April and May in the northern hemisphere. The fine season was felt gradually approaching and the expedition might have been carried farther under



BRANDISHING THEIR SPEARS, THEIR BOWS AND ARROWS . . . (*p.* 130).

rather favorable conditions. But it could not go on indefinitely; and it should come to an end, as previously agreed upon, at the point where the current by which the débris of a wreck might be carried east toward Melville Island would cease to be felt.

And this fact was ascertained at the end of the month of January, 1883, when they had explored—unsuccessfully as heretofore—the wide estuary of the King Sund, into which flows the Fitz Roy River.

At the mouth of this important river our party had had to withstand a terrific onslaught on the part of the natives, and two of the men had sealed their bravery with their blood. True, their wounds were not of a dangerous character, but Captain Ellis's undaunted coolness had alone saved the crew from wholesale slaughter.

As soon as she had got clear of the King Sund, the *Dolly's Hope* cast anchor off Cape Lévêque, and the captain held a council with his second officer and the boatswain. The maps were once more carefully studied and it was finally resolved that the expedition should end at this very point, on the eighteenth parallel of the southern hemisphere. Beyond the King Sund, the coast is clear; the islands are but few, and the portion of Tasmania which this coast bounds on the Indian Ocean is still a blank on the most recent maps. There was therefore no interest in going farther southwest or in visiting Dampier's Archipelago.

Besides, the coal was getting scarce; it was best to lose no time in reaching Batavia, where a fresh supply could be taken aboard; thence they would sail east toward the Pacific through the Timor Sea, along the islands of the Sunda.

Accordingly the *Dolly's Hope* was set north, and soon lost sight of the Australian coast.

CHAPTER XIV.

BROWSE ISLAND.

THE space comprised between the northwestern coast of Australia, and the western part of the Timor Sea, reckons no important islands. The geographers mention no more than a few islets. What are found in those parts are those strange sea-bottom coral growths, designated by such suffixes as "banks," "rocks," "riffs," or "shoals," such as Lynher Riff, Scott's Riff, Seringapatam Riff, Korallen Riff, Courtier Shoal, Hibernia Shoal, Sahul Bank, Echo Rock, etc. The position of these dangerous spots is marked accurately for the greater part, approximatively for the others. It may be, indeed, that many more of these treacherous rocks, now barely concealed from view by the waves, have yet to be discovered. Sailing is therefore a somewhat difficult task, and requires constant watchfulness on these seas that are sometimes crossed by ships on their way from India.

The weather was fine, the sea calm outside the breakers. The excellent machinery of the *Dolly's Hope* had not got out of order since her departure from San Diego, and her boilers were in splendid condition. Everything, the sea and the weather, combined to favor a speedy voyage across to Cape Lévêque and Java Island. In any case they were homeward bound now! No delay would now occur but the few stops Captain Ellis intended to make to further explore the smaller islands of the Sunda.

During the first few days after leaving Cape Lévêque, nothing took place worth noting. The greatest vigilance was recommended to the men on lookout. From their posts up in the masts they were to signal, from as far off as possible, any shoal or reef that might be ahead.

On the 7th of February, about nine o'clock in the morn-

ing, one of the sailors, perched up in the foreyards, cried out :

" Rocks ahead ; larboard side ! "

As this rock could not yet be seen by the men on deck, Zach Fren clambered up the shrouds to find out for himself its exact position.

From this observatory the boatswain was able to see distinctly a rocky plateau, six miles out to larboard. In reality, it was neither a rock nor a shoal, but positively an island, the saddle-back shape of which stood out on the northwest horizon. And, taking the distance into consideration, this island should be of a certain size, if what was then visible was its width.

A few minutes later Zach Fren came down and made his report to Captain Ellis, who immediately ordered the ship to be luffed a quarter, so as to get near the island.

After taking his midday observations, the captain noted in the logbook that the *Dolly's Hope* was then in 14° 7′ latitude south, and 133° 13′ longitude east. This position being made out on the map, coincided with an island designated by the name of Browse Island by modern geographers and situated at about 250 miles from York Sund on the Australian coast.

Since this island lay almost on his course, Captain Ellis determined to go around it, although he had no intention of stopping there.

At one o'clock in the afternoon the *Dolly's Hope* was but a mile distant from Browse Island. The sea was rather rough and angry. A cloud of spray enshrouded a kind of cape stretching out toward the northeast. The size of the island could not yet be ascertained, as it could only be viewed obliquely. In any case, it presented the appearance of an undulating plateau, void of any elevation visible on its surface.

However, as time was precious, Captain Ellis, after

slackening speed a little, was about giving the command to the engineer to go ahead, when Zach Fren called to him.

"Captain, look out there! Isn't that a mast sticking up on the cape?"

And the boatswain stretched his hand in the direction of the cape, which terminated abruptly in a steep rock at its northeastern extremity.

"A mast? No! It looks like the trunk of a tree," replied the captain.

Then taking his glass, he looked more attentively at the object pointed out to him.

"After all, you are right, bos'n!" said he. "It is a mast and I think I can see a bit of bunting all tattered by the wind. Yes! Yes! It must be a signal!"

"Then we might do well to get close to," said the boatswain.

"That's my opinion," said the captain.

And he gave the order to bear on Browse Island, and to keep a good lookout.

This command was immediately put into effect. The *Dolly's Hope* gradually approached the rocks that surrounded the island a few hundred feet off the coast. The sea was beating against them with rage, not so much on account of the wind as because the currents drove the waves in that direction.

Soon the details of the coast could be seen with the naked eye. It seemed to be wild, barren, desolate, without a vestige of verdure. Here wide gaping caverns re-echoed the rumbling of the tide with a noise of thunder, there a patch of yellow sand broke the monotony of the rocks; above swarmed flocks of sea birds. On this side no trace of a wreck could be perceived, no broken masts, or remains of a hull. The mast planted on the extremity of the rock was very probably a fragment of a bowsprit; as to the faded

ZACH FREN CLAMBERED UP TO SEE FOR HIMSELF (*p.* 139).

bunting, the ragged remnants of which were flying in the breeze, it was impossible to recognize its original color.

"There are shipwrecked folks there," exclaimed Zach Fren.

"Or may be there have been some!" said the mate.

"It's very plain," said Captain Ellis, "that some ship or other ran slap on to this island."

"And what's just as plain," added the mate, "is that the sailors took refuge on it, since they rigged up that mast as a signal, and maybe they are on it still, for it's very unusual for ships bound for Australia or India to pass this way."

"I suppose you mean to go ashore, Captain?" inquired Zach Fren.

"If we can, bos'n; I have not seen a place where we could land yet. Before making up our minds let us go around it. If it is still inhabited by castaways they can't but see us, and they'll signal to us."

"And suppose we don't see a soul, what are you thinking of doing?" asked Fren.

"We'll go ashore as soon as we find a landing place. Even if there is nobody on it now, we might find some remnants of a wreck on the island, and that would be something gained on our present errand."

"And who knows——" murmured Zach.

"Who knows what? Do you mean to say, bos'n, that the *Franklin* could have been thrown on Browse Island, right out of the course she ought to have been on?"

"Why not, Captain?"

"Well, I don't think it the least likely," said Captain Ellis, "but we must not stop at that. Of course we'll try and get a landing!"

The proposed sail around the island was at once put into execution. By keeping, for safety's sake, a cable's length from the rocks, the *Dolly's Hope* had soon rounded the several promontories stretching out north of the island.

The aspect of the coast was still the same—the rocks drawn up in rows as though they had been crystalized in that almost identical shape, the same seabeaten shore and spray-covered reefs which rendered a landing impracticable. In the background a few clumps of cocoanut trees overtopping a rocky plateau on which no sign of culture was visible. No inhabitants. No habitations. Not a sloop, not a fishing boat. A desert sea and a desert island. Numerous flocks of seagulls, flying from rock to rock, were the only signs of life in this gloomy solitude.

Although it was not the ideal island of shipwrecked seamen, where the necessaries of life are assured, this spot might at least have afforded shelter to the survivors of some wreck.

Browse Island measures about six or seven miles in circumference ; this much was ascertained when the *Dolly's Hope* had completed the circuit. In vain did the crew look for the mouth of some haven, or, in lieu of a haven, a creek between the rocks where the steamer could ride in safety, at least for a few hours. It soon became evident that a landing could only be effected by using one of the ship's boats ; and even then, a landing place should be found.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon before the *Dolly's Hope* got to the leeward of the island. As the wind now came from the northwest, the rush of the waves against the shore was not so violent. Just here, the coast, describing a wide concavity, made a kind of open bay, in which a vessel might ride at anchor without danger so long as the wind did not change its quarter. It was then decided that the *Dolly's Hope* should remain there, if not at anchor, at least, almost at a standstill, while her steam launch would go ashore. There remained to be found a place where the men could find a footing amid those rocks, whitened with the foam of the surf.

THE BOAT VENTURED INTO THE NARROW PASS (*p.* 143).

By dint of searching the coast with his glass, Captain Ellis at last found a depression of the plateau, a kind of cleft made into the island, through which a stream poured itself into the sea.

After looking in his turn, Zach Fren affirmed that a landing could be made at the foot of this cleft. The coast seemed to be less steep in this part and its surface was indented by a pretty sharp angle. A narrow passage could also be discerned across the reef, over which the sea did not break.

In half an hour the launch was ready, and the captain embarked along with Zach Fren, a helmsman, a gaff man, a stoker, and an engineer. For prudence sake, two rifles, two hatchets, and a few revolvers were put aboard. During the captain's absence, the second officer was to maneuver the *Dolly's Hope* in the bay and to give his attention to any signal that might be made from the shore.

At half-past two the boat pushed off, made for the shore, a good mile distant, and soon ventured into the narrow pass, while thousands of sea gulls filled the air with their piercing cries. A few minutes later, it ran smoothly on a sandy beach intersected with sharp ridges. Captain Ellis, Zach Fren, and the two sailors went ashore, leaving the engineer and stoker in charge of the launch, which was to be kept with full steam up. Then having climbed the ravine through which the stream flowed down to the sea, the four men reached the level of the plateau.

A few hundred steps ahead of them stood a sort of rocky mound of peculiar shape, the summit of which rose a hundred feet above the beach.

Captain Ellis and his companions immediately made their way to this rock, ascended it, not without great difficulty, and they were now able to descry the whole island from this elevated ground.

It was, in reality, but an oval mass, not unlike the back

of a tortoise, the tail of which would have been represented by the promontory. A thin coat of soil covered this mass here and there; it was not of madreporic formation like the *attolons* of the Malay seas or the coral groups in the Torres Strait; now and again patches of green appeared between the layers of granite; but there was more moss than grass, more stone than roots, more brushwood than shrubs. Whence came this creek, whose course, visible for a certain distance, meandered across the slopes of the plateau. Was it the outpour of some interior spring? It would have been hard to tell, although the view extended as far as the mast bearing the signal of distress.

From the top of this mound the four men turned their eyes in every direction. No smoke curled up into the air, not a human being appeared anywhere. The inevitable conclusion was that if Browse Island had been inhabited—and of that there was no doubt—it was very unlikely to be so at present.

"Poor kind of place to be cast on!" observed Captain Ellis. "If the unfortunate people were kept here any length of time, I wonder what they can have lived on!"

"You are right there," said Zach Fren, "a flat place and a very bare one. Just a dozen trees for the look of the thing, and a handful of soil sprinkled over the stones. Anyhow, you must not be too exacting when you're wrecked! A lump of rock under your feet is a sight better than no footing at all and water over your head!"

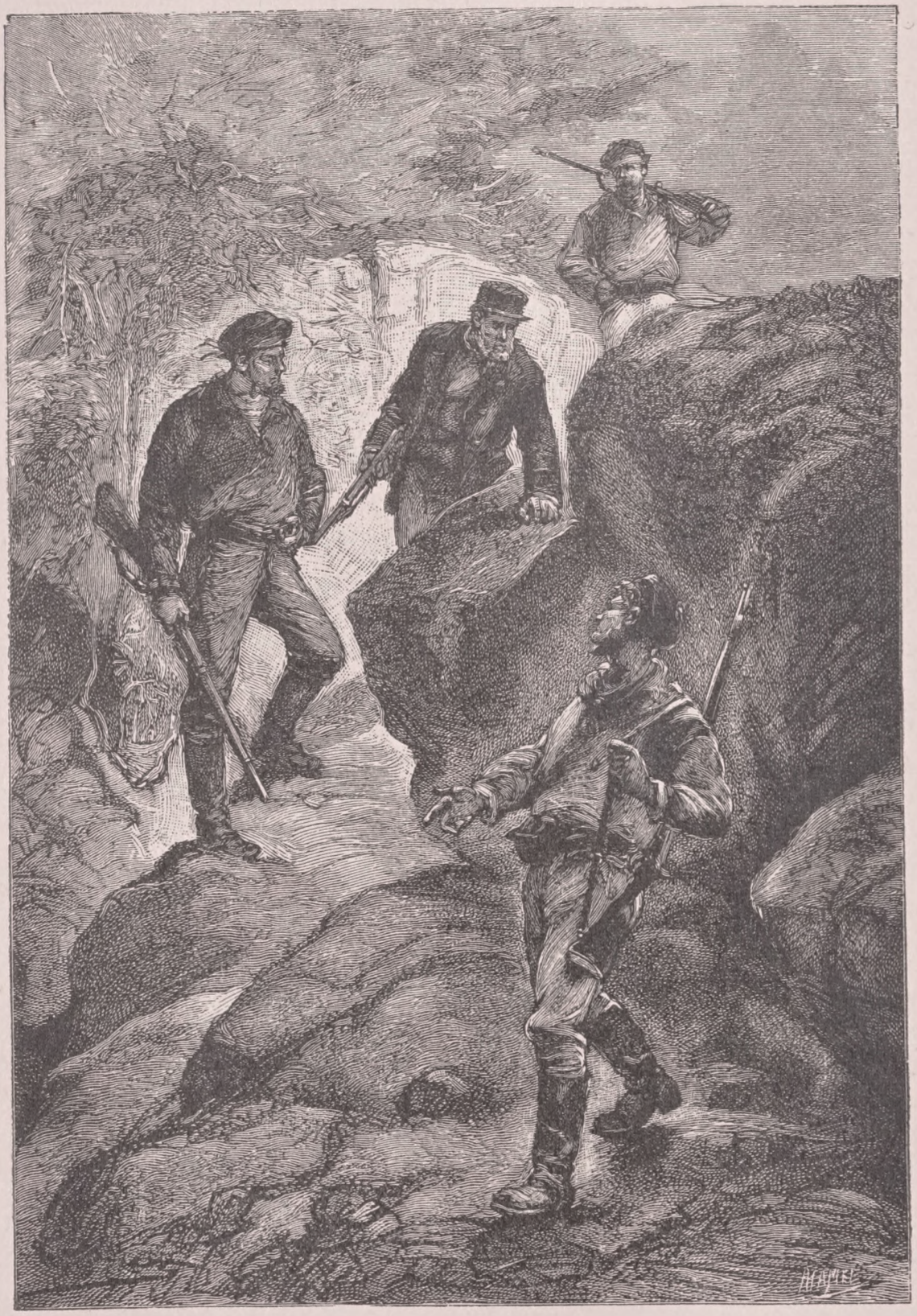
"It is so, at first," said the captain; "but afterward!"

"Besides," continued Zach, "the men who took refuge on this island may have been picked up before long by some vessel."

"Just the same as they may have died of starvation."

"And what makes you think so, Captain?"

"Just this: if they had been able to leave the island in some way or another, they would have taken the precau-



THE PARTY WENT DOWN AGAIN (*p.* 145).

tion to knock down their signal of distress. That's why I am afraid the last of these unfortunate men died before any help came to him. Anyhow, let us push on to the mast. Perhaps we will be able to find out some sign of the nationality of the ship."

The party thereupon went down the side of the rock again, and began walking in the direction of the headland. But they had hardly gone a hundred steps when one of the sailors stooped to pick up an object he had just knocked with his foot.

"Hello, what's that?" said he.

"Let me see!" said Fren.

It was the blade of a cutlass, such as sailors wear in their belts, incased in a leathern sheath. This blade, broken off at the handle and all notched, had no doubt been thrown away as useless.

"Well, bos'n?" inquired the captain.

"I am looking for some mark that would show where this blade came from, sir."

It was of course possible that it should bear a trade mark, but it had become so oxidized that a thick coat of rust had first to be scraped off.

This Zach soon accomplished, and ultimately managed to decipher two words engraved on the steel: "Sheffield, England."

This cutlass was then of English make. But to conclude therefrom that the castaways were English would have been too hasty. Why might not this weapon have belonged to a sailor of any other nationality, seeing that the products of Sheffield are scattered the world over? If some other article was found this supposition might perchance be changed into a certainty.

Captain Ellis and his men continued on further toward the headland. Over this trackless ground, walking was no easy task. Admitting that it had been once trodden by the

foot of man it must have been at some remote date, for all traces of footmarks had disappeared under the grass and moss.

After a tramp of a couple of miles, they stopped near a clump of cocoanut trees, very weakly trees indeed, the nuts of which had long since fallen to the ground, and were now so much dust and rottenness.

Hitherto no other object had been picked up ; but a few paces from this clump, on the slope of a little valley, some signs of culture could be made out in the midst of this brushwood-entangled wilderness. What was left of it consisted of some yams and batatas, that had almost returned to the wild state. A spade was lying under some thick brambles, where one of the sailors discovered it by chance. It seemed to be of American make, by the look of the iron haft, which was deeply embedded with rust.

"What do you think of it, Captain?" asked the boatswain.

"I think that we can say nothing positive yet," replied the captain.

"Let's come along a bit farther, then," said Zach Fren, beckoning to the two men to follow him.

After going down the side of the plateau, they came to the neck which joined the promontory to the mainland. At this spot a narrow channel, furrowed in the ridge of the rock, enabled them to reach more easily the level of a sandy beach below. This beach, covering about an acre, was encased with reddish brown rocks, which seemed forever beaten by the waves.

On this sand lay a number of articles, showing that human beings had lived for a considerable time on this part of the island—bits of glass, or earthenware, broken pots, iron bolts, empty preserved meat tins, the American manufacture of which there was no doubting, this time ; several objects used at sea, some fragments of chains, split

rings, tips of rigging in galvanized iron, a twisted ring, the handle of a pump, fragments of spars and spare yards, iron plates torn from a water-tank, on the origin of which the Californian sailors could not be mistaken.

"That never came out of an English ship," said the captain; "that vessel belonged to the States."

"And you could almost swear she was built in one of our Pacific ports!" added Zach Fren, whose opinion was shared by the two sailors.

In any case, up to the present, nothing justified them in believing that the ill-fated ship was the *Franklin.*

One question, however, suggested itself: had this ship, whatever was her name, gone down in the open sea (as neither her frame nor the planks of her hull were in sight anywhere), and had the crew managed to reach Browse Island in her long boats?

No! It was not long ere Captain Ellis acquired proof evident that the wreck had taken place on these reefs.

A hundred steps away from the beach, in a chaotic heap of sharp rocks and breakers, appeared that woeful skeleton of a vessel that is dashed ashore when the billows rush on her with the force of a gigantic bore, and when in an instant her whole frame, whether of wood or of iron, is broken asunder, crushed to pieces, scattered and hurled by the tide over the very summit of the reefs.

The four men looked with no trifling emotion on what the rocks still preserved of the disaster. Of the hull there remained a few shapeless ribs, some shivered planks, bristling with broken bolts, some bent iron bars, a piece of the rudder, a few stakes belonging to the deck, but none of the outside riggings, none of the masts, whether they had been broken off at sea, or used after the wreck to make huts on the island. Not a rib had remained intact, not one piece of the keel had been left whole. In the presence of those granite spikes, which reminded one of a fence of *chevaux*

de frise, it seemed no wonder the vessel had been so utterly destroyed that none of its débris could be of any use.

"Let us look," said Captain Ellis, "perhaps we may find a name, a letter, a mark of some kind that will tell us the nationality of this ship."

"Yes! and God grant that it is not the *Franklin* that has been reduced to such a state!" added Zach Fren.

But was there such a sign as the captain wished for? Even though the waves had so far respected the aft panel, or the fore armor, where the name of a ship is generally found, would not the inclemency of the weather and the spray from the shore have obliterated it?

As a matter of fact, nothing was discovered, neither armor nor panel. The search proved fruitless, and even though some of the objects picked up were undoubtedly of American make, nothing showed positively that they belonged to the missing ship.

But if several men had taken refuge on Browse Island,—and the flagpost stuck on the headland showed it,—if they had lived on this island for a length of time that could not now be ascertained, they must have taken shelter in some cave near the beach, so as to be able to use the remnants of the wreck accumulated on the rocks.

Before long one of the sailors found the cave that had been occupied by the shipwrecked men. It was hollowed in an enormous mass of granite, in the angle formed by the plateau and the shore.

Captain Ellis and the boatswain hastened to the sailor's call. Perhaps this cavern contained the secret of the disaster. Perhaps it would tell them the name of the ship.

The only way to penetrate into it was by a low and narrow opening, near which lay a heap of ashes. Here, outside their cave, they had made the camp fire; the rocky wall was still blackened with the smoke.

Inside, the cavern might have been ten feet high, twenty

long, and fifteen wide; it was large enough to accommodate a dozen people. Its whole furniture consisted of a litter of dried grass, covered over with a ragged sail, a bench made with bits of planks, two stools of the same make, a rickety table from the ship—probably from the captain's cabin. By way of intensils, a few tin plates and dishes, three forks, two spoons, a knife, three metal drinking cups, all red with rust. In one corner was a barrel standing on end, which must have been used to keep the water they fetched from the creek. On the table, a ship's lamp, knocked out of shape and rusty, which had proved utterly useless no doubt. Here and there a few kitchen utensils, and, near the bed of grass, some tattered garments.

"Poor wretches!" sighed Zach Fren, "what hardships they must have gone through while they were here!"

"They had hardly saved anything of any use from the ship," remarked the captain; "that shows with what violence she must have struck the shore! Everything smashed up; everything! What did the poor wretches live on? Most likely a few grains they saved, salt pork and preserved meat that they devoured to the last tin! But what a life, and what they must have suffered!"

Yes! that, along with any fish they may have been able to catch, was everything the shipwrecked party must have had for their sustenance. As to their being still on the island, the thing seemed out of the question. Indeed, if they had died on it, it was probable that the remains of the last survivor would be found. And still the most minute exploration, both inside and outside the cavern, failed to give any result.

"I'd almost think they managed to get off the island," said Zach Fren.

"How could they?" asked Captain Ellis. "Could they have made a boat big enough to put to sea with the remnants of their wreck?"

"No, Captain, they hadn't even enough to make a rowing boat, I should say. What I rather think is that their signals may have been seen by some ship."

"Well, I can't believe it, bos'n."

"Why not, sir?"

"Because, if any vessel had picked them up, the news would have spread over the whole world, unless this vessel too had gone down—which is hardly likely. No, I can't get it into my head that they got out of this island in that way."

"Very well!" answered Zach, who was hard to convince against his will. "But if they were unable to make a sloop we are not so sure that all the ship's boats were lost in the wreck, and in that case——"

"In that case," retorted the captain, "they must have gone down; for I can't imagine how a ship's boat could weather it all through those hundreds of miles between this and the Australian coast! And you know that no lost crew has been heard to have been picked up in these parts."

It would have been hard to argue the question further. Zach Fren had tact enough to understand it, but, unwilling to go without finding out if possible what had become of the survivors of the wreck, he ventured to say:

"I suppose, Captain, you mean to have a look at the other parts of the island?"

"Yes—as a matter of duty!" was the reply; "and first of all let us take down that flag of distress to save any ship coming out of her way, since there is no one left to rescue!"

One last time the beach was thoroughly searched. Then, having regained the plateau by way of the ravine they had followed on their way down, they bent their steps toward the extremity of the headland.

Soon a short detour became necessary, in order to avoid a deep excavation, a sort of stony pond in which the rain-water collected, and their way now lay straight before them.

Suddenly the captain stopped on reaching a spot where the ground was marked by four peculiar mounds, parallel to each other. Probably this might have escaped his attention had not small wooden crosses, crumbling to dust, marked each of these mounds. They were graves. Here was the cemetery of the unhappy men.

"At last," cried Captain Ellis; "now we may learn something, perhaps."

It surely was no disrespect to the dead to open those graves, take out the bodies contained in them, to examine the state they were in, and seek in the sacredness of their last abode some indication of their nationality.

The two sailors set to work, and, digging the ground with their knives, heaped it up on either side as they went on. But a number of years must have gone by since these had been buried there, for there remained nothing but bones. The captain ordered them to be covered over again, and the crosses were replaced on the tombs.

The question of the shipwreck was far from being resolved. If four men had been buried in this spot, what had become of him who had rendered them the last services? And where had he fallen himself when death overtook him? Would not his bones be found blanching on some part of the island?

Captain Ellis grew hopeless.

"Shall we never find out the name of this ship?" he cried. "Shall we have to go back to San Diego without discovering the remains of the *Franklin;* without knowing what has become of John Branican and his crew?"

"Why might not this ship be the *Franklin?*" asked one of the men.

"And why should it be?" returned Zach Fren.

Indeed there was no evidence that the wreck lying on the rocks of Browse Island was the *Franklin,* and it seemed

as though this second expedition of the *Dolly's Hope* was to be as utter a failure as the first.

Captain Ellis remained silent, his eyes bent on that soil where the poor castaways had seen the end of their misery only with the end of their lives! Were they countrymen of his? Americans like himself? Were they those whom the *Dolly's Hope* had come in search of?

"To the flagpost!" said he.

Zach and his men followed him, as he went down the long rocky slope that joined the headland to the bulk of the island.

It took them twenty minutes to cover the half mile separating them from the signal post, so encumbered was the ground with brambles and stones.

When the captain and his companions came up to the mast they found that it was stuck into a deep hole in the rock—which explained how it had been able to resist the wind and storms for so long. As had already been made out with the telescope, this mast—a piece of the bowsprit—was a débris of the wreck.

As to the rag nailed to it, it was only a portion of a sail, torn to pieces by the wind, and bearing no indication of nationality on it.

At the captain's command the two sailors were about to knock down the pole, when Zach Fren cried out:

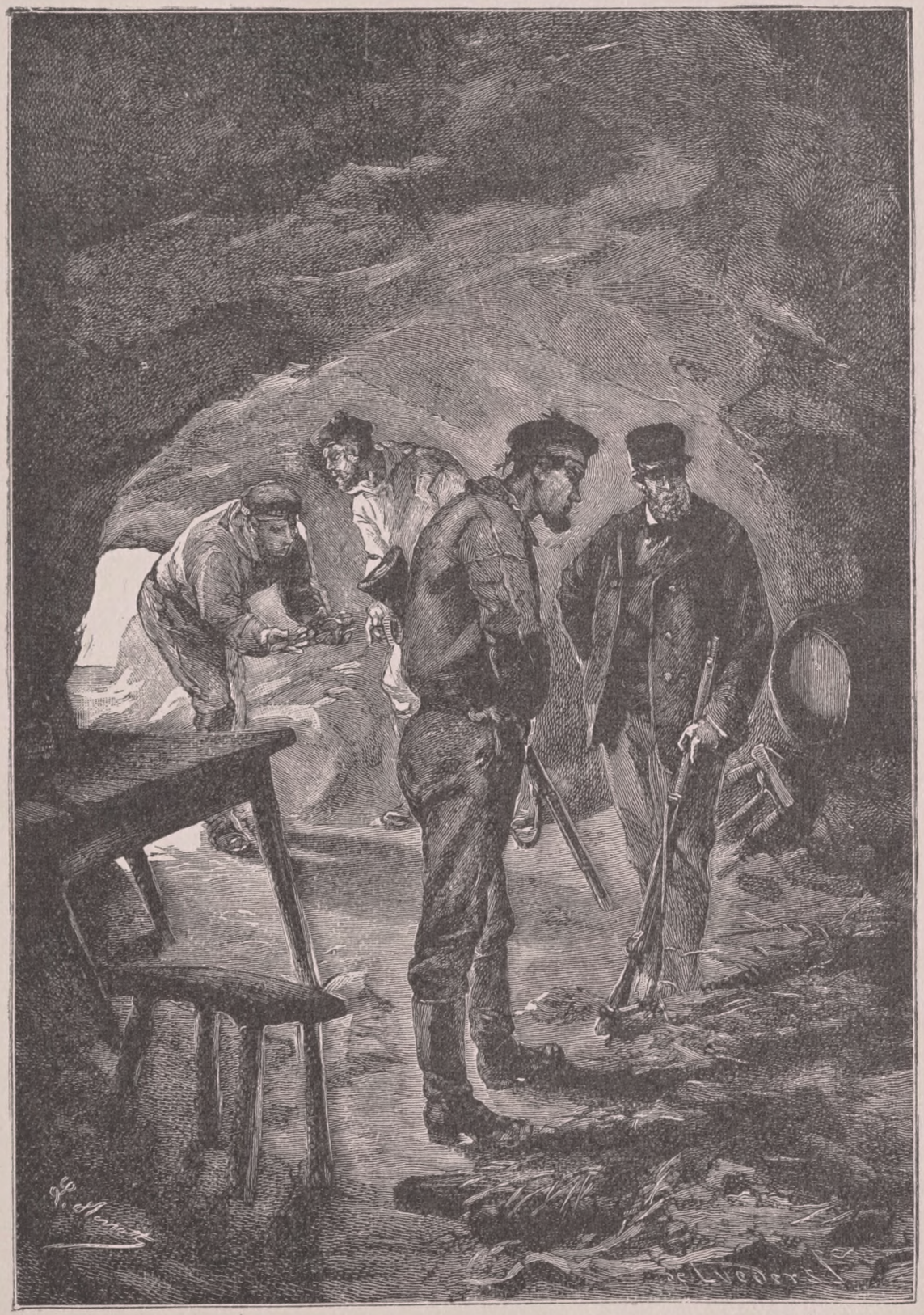
"Captain—look—over there!"

"What is it, bos'n?"

"Why, a bell!"

Fastened to a frame that was still pretty strong was a bell, the handle of which was eaten with rust.

So the refugees had not been content with rigging up a mast and nailing a flag to it. They had brought the ship's bell to the same spot, hoping that it might be heard by some vessel passing within sight of the island. But would not this bell have the name of the ship to which it belonged



A Litter of dried Grass . . . . (*p.* 149).

engraved on it, as is the almost universal practice in every marine service?

Captain Ellis was on the point of going over to the frame, when he stopped short.

At the foot of the structure lay a skeleton, or rather a mass of bones to which a few rags were yet adhering.

The survivors who had taken refuge on Browse Island were then five in number. Four had died, and the fifth had been left by himself.

Then one day he had left the cave, and dragging himself to the far end of the headland he had rung the bell to try and make himself heard by a passing ship—and he had fallen there, never to rise again.

After having a grave made to cover these bones, Captain Ellis beckoned to Zach Fren to follow him and examine the bell.

On the bronze had been deeply engraved the still visible word and date:

FRANKLIN.

1875.

CHAPTER XV.

A LIVING WAIF.

WHILE the *Dolly's Hope* was performing her second task across the Timor Sea and terminating it in the way just narrated, Mrs. Branican, her friends, and the families of the lost crew had gone through all the agony of suspense. What hopes had been built on that plank picked up by the *Californian*, and acknowledged to have belonged to the *Franklin*! Would Captain Ellis succeed in discovering the wreck of the ship on one of the islands of that sea, or on some point of the Australian coast? Would he find

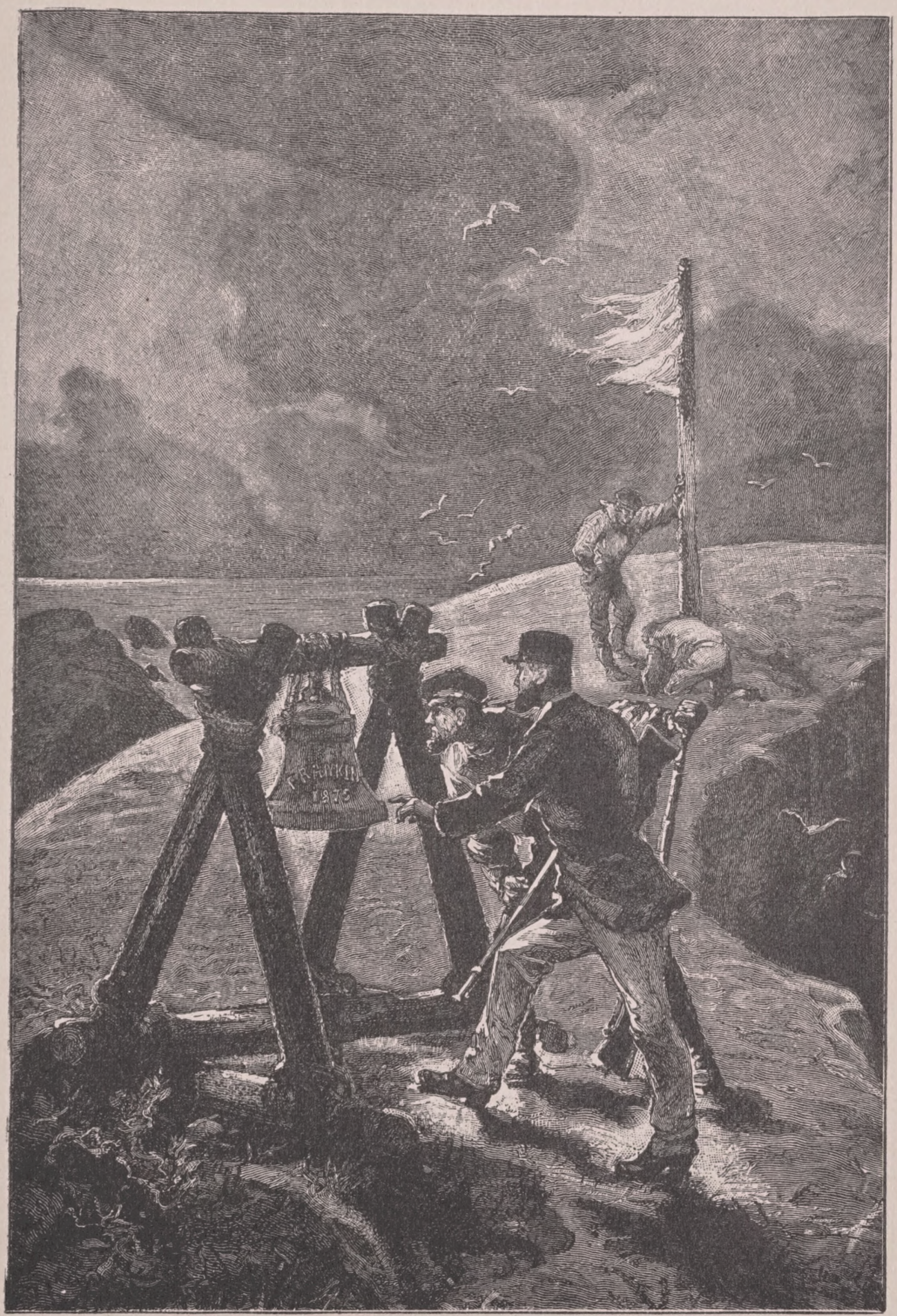
John Branican, Harry Felton, and the twelve men under them? Would he bring back to San Diego one or several survivors of this catastrophe?

Two letters from the search party had reached them since the departure of the *Dolly's Hope*. The first announced the unsuccessful result of the exploration of the Torres Strait and as far as the limit of the Arafoura Sea. The second related how the Melville and Bathhurst Islands had been visited and had shown no trace of the *Franklin*. Mrs. Branican was advised that the search would be continued as far as the western part of Australia, all along the Timor Sea, among the several archipelagoes bordering on Tasmania; then the *Dolly's Hope* would return, though not until the smaller islands of the Sunda had been thoroughly explored and every chance of a successful issue had been exhausted.

No fresh tidings had been received since this letter. Several months had worn their weary length along, and now from one day to another they were expecting the *Dolly's Hope* to be signaled by the semaphores of San Diego.

The year 1882 came to a close, and although Captain Ellis was not heard of yet, there was no cause for wonder, seeing how slow and irregular are postal communications across the Pacific Ocean. There was, therefore, no uneasiness to be felt concerning the ship he commanded, natural as was the general feeling of impatience to see her again.

Still, toward the end of February, William Andrew began to think the *Dolly's Hope* had been away an exceptionally long time. Every day a number of people repaired to Island Point in the hope of sighting the vessel afar off. As soon as she could be seen, and without any need of deciphering her number, the sailors of San Diego would very soon recognize her, were it but by her very gait—just as you know a Frenchman from a German, or even an Englishman from an American.



THE "FRANKLIN'S" BELL (*p.* 152).

At last, on the morning of March 27, the *Dolly's Hope* did come in sight, about nine miles out, coming at full speed, under a fresh northwesterly breeze. In an hour's time she would be past the entrance and would have taken her place at anchor in the Bay of San Diego.

The news ran swiftly through the town, and the population was soon out, some on the wharves, others on Island Point and Loma Point, to await the vessel.

Mrs. Branican, William Andrew, and a few friends, desirous of getting into communication with the returning vessel with the least possible delay, took a steam tug to go and meet her down the bay. A feeling of intense anxiety oppressed the expectant crowd, and when the tug had passed the last wharf on its way out, not a shout was raised. It seemed as though, had Captain Ellis been successful in this second trip, the news should already have traveled the world over.

Twenty minutes later Mrs. Branican and her party boarded the *Dolly's Hope*.

A few seconds after they all knew the result of the expedition. It was at the western limit of Timor Sea, on Browse Island, that the *Franklin* was lost. There it was that the survivors of the wreck had taken refuge. There they had died !

" All of them ? " asked Mrs Branican.

" All ! " replied Captain Ellis.

A gloom spread over San Diego when the *Dolly's Hope* anchored in the middle of the bay, her flag half mast, in sign of mourning—in mourning for the *Franklin's* crew.

She had left on the 3d of April, 1882 ; it was now the 27th of March, 1883. Her cruise had lasted nearly twelve months—a cruise during which nothing had been left undone. The only result obtained was the crushing of the last lingering glimmer of hope.

During the few minutes Mrs. Branican and Mr. Andrew

had been aboard, Captain Ellis had been able to give them a summary of the facts he had gathered relative to the *Franklin's* wreck on the reefs of Browse Island.

Although she was now told that there was no doubt as to the fate of Captain John and his companions, Mrs. Branican none the less maintained her attitude of old. Not a tear burst from her eyes. Not a question did she utter. In truth, since the broken débris of the ship had been found on this island, since not one survivor remained of those who had taken refuge on it, what more could she have asked for the present? A detailed account of the expedition would be given her later on. Accordingly, after shaking hands with Captain Ellis and Zach Fren, she retired to the aft of the deck, and there sat, musing with her thought; in spite of so many unanswerable proofs, her spirit was unconquered still; no widow of John Branican's did she acknowledge herself yet!

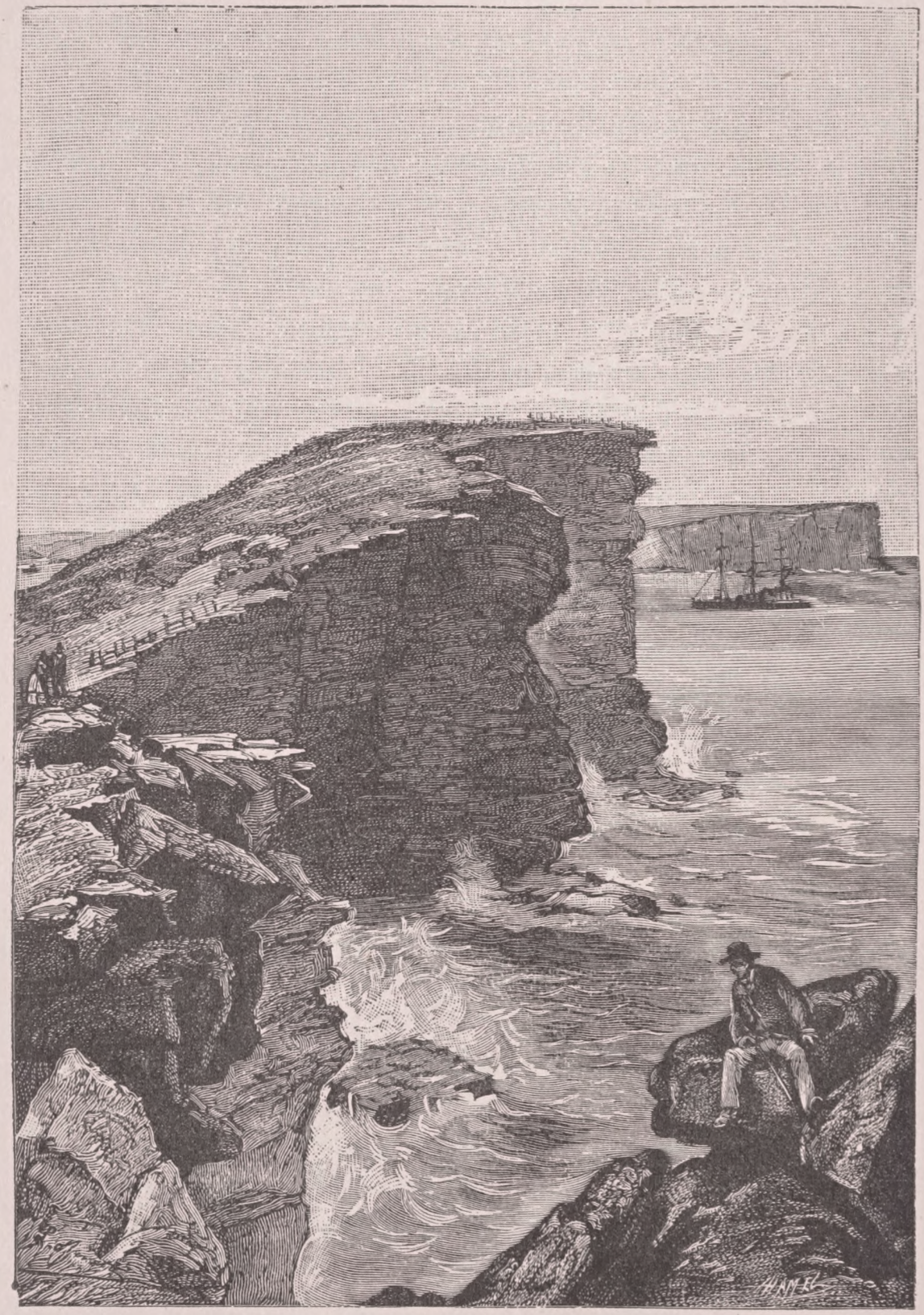
As the *Dolly's Hope* dropped anchor in the bay, Dolly came forward and requested Mr. Andrew, Captain Ellis, and Zach Fren to kindly call at Prospect House that same day, as she was anzious to hear all the details of their exploration across the Torres Strait, Arafoura Sea, and Timor Sea; she would expect them in the afternoon.

A small boat brought her ashore.

The crowd drew aside respectfully to let her pass as she crossed the wharf on her way homeward.

About three o'clock in the afternoon, Mr. Andrew, Captain Ellis, and the boatswain arrived at the cottage and were immediately shown into the drawing-room, on the ground floor, where Mrs. Branican was awaiting them.

A map of the North Australian seas was spread on the table; they sat round it, and, on Dolly's invitation, the captain began his account, speaking as though he had the ship's log book under his eyes, relating every single item, touching on every incident, and, at times, turning to Zach Fren for



EVERY DAY A NUMBER OF PEOPLE REPAIRED TO ISLAND POINT (*p.* 154).

confirmation of his statement. He even detailed the searches and explorations made in the Torres Strait, the Arafoura Sea, on Melville and Bathurst islands, among the Tasmanian archipelagoes, needless though it was, to say the least. But Mrs. Branican showed an interest in the most trifling of these minutiæ, listening in silence, staring at the captain with a gaze that did not flinch for an instant.

When the narrator came to the episodes on Browse Island, he should needs give an account of everything as it had taken place, hour by hour, minute by minute, from the time the *Dolly's Hope* had sighted the flag of distress on the top of the headland. Dolly, still motionless save for the slight tremor of her hands, saw the diverse incidents in her imagination as though they were succeeding each other before her eyes : the landing of Captain Ellis and his men at the mouth of the creek, the climbing of the rocks, the cutlass blade found on the ground, the signs of culture, the abandoned spade, the beach covered with the débris of the wreck, the remains of the *Franklin* fastened among the rocks, where she had been thrown by some violent storm, the cavern in which the shipwrecked men had lived, the finding of the four graves, the skeleton of the last of the unfortunates lying at the foot of the flagpost near the alarm bell. At this moment, Dolly stood up as though she had heard the toll of that bell in the stillness of Prospect House.

And then Captain Ellis, taking a locket from his pocket, all tarnished by dampness, handed it to her.

It was her portrait—a locket with her picture, now half effaced, that she had given John on his departure ; and that had been found, at the last moment, in a dark corner of the cavern.

And, if this locket was in itself a proof that Captain John was one of the five men who had sought shelter on the island, was not the conclusion unavoidable that he was

among those who had succumbed to the hardships of long endured privations?

On that map of the Australian seas she had so often pored over for seven years, Dolly asked to be shown Browse Island, an almost imperceptible dot, lost in the immensity of the seas.

"Had we arrived a few years sooner," added Captain Ellis, "we might have found them all still alive perhaps, John and his companions."

"Yes, perhaps so," murmured William Andrew, "and it was there the *Dolly's Hope* should have gone in the first place! But who could have imagined that the *Franklin* would have been wrecked in the Indian Ocean?"

"Nobody," replied Captain Ellis, "judging by the course that she was to follow, and did follow, since she was seen south of Celebes Island! Captain John must have lost all control over his ship, and then been dragged through the Sunda Straits into Timor Sea, and swept on to Browse Island."

"There is not a doubt of it; that's how it must have happened," added Zach Fren.

"Captain," then said Mrs. Branican, "when you looked for the *Franklin* in the Malay Seas you did what anyone would have done, although it was Browse Island that should have been visited first. Yes—it was!"

Then, as though she wished to possess herself of accurate figures wherewith to justify the obstinacy of her hopefulness:

"On board the ship, there were Captain John, the mate, Harry Felton, and twelve men. You found on the island the remains of four men who had been buried, and of a fifth who had died at the foot of the flagpost. What think you had become of the nine others?"

"That we don't know," answered Captain Ellis.

"I am aware you don't know," was the persistent reply;

"but I ask you: What do you think can have become of them?"

"Perhaps they perished when the *Franklin* struck the rocks."

"You imagine, then, that only five survived the wreck?"

"It is, unfortunately, the most probable explanation," added Mr. Andrew.

"That is not my opinion," said Mrs. Branican. "Why could not John, Felton, and the twelve others have reached Browse Island safe and sound? And why could not nine of them have managed to leave it?"

"How could they, Mrs. Branican?" asked Captain Ellis sharply.

"By making a boat out of the wreck of their ship."

"Madam, Zach Fren will tell you the same as I do, that in the state in which we found the débris the thing seemed entirely out of the question!"

"What about one of their own boats, then?"

"The boats belonging to the *Franklin*, admitting that they were not broken to pieces, could not have undertaken a voyage across to the Australian coast, or to the Sunda Islands."

"And besides," observed William Andrew, "if nine of them were able to leave the island, why should the five others have remained behind?"

"Let me add," continued the captain, "that if they did get a boat of some sort, those who embarked in it were drowned at sea, or were captured by the Australian natives, since they have never reappeared!"

Mrs. Branican, without showing any signs of faltering, turned to the boatswain:

"Zach Fren," said she, "are you of the same opinion as Captain Ellis?"

"I am thinking," he answered, shaking his head, "I am thinking that things may have happened in that way, of

course ; but it's just as possible they turned out another way ! "

" And I'm thinking," said Mrs. Branican, " that we have no absolute proof whatever of the fate that befell the nine men whose remains were not found on the island. As to you and your crew, Captain Ellis, you did all that the most untiring devotion could do."

" I should like to have succeeded better, madam ! "

" We will leave you, now, my dear Dolly," said Mr. Andrew, thinking the interview had lasted quite long enough.

" Thank you, dear friend," she answered. " I need to be alone. But whenever Captain Ellis would care to come to Prospect House, I should be happy to talk to him about John and his companions."

" I shall be always at your service, madam," replied the captain.

" And you, too, Zach Fren ; always bear in mind that my house is yours."

" Mine ? " repeated the boatswain. " And what's going to happen the *Dolly's Hope ?* "

" The *Dolly's Hope ?* " said Mrs. Branican, as though the question seemed to her quite unnecessary.

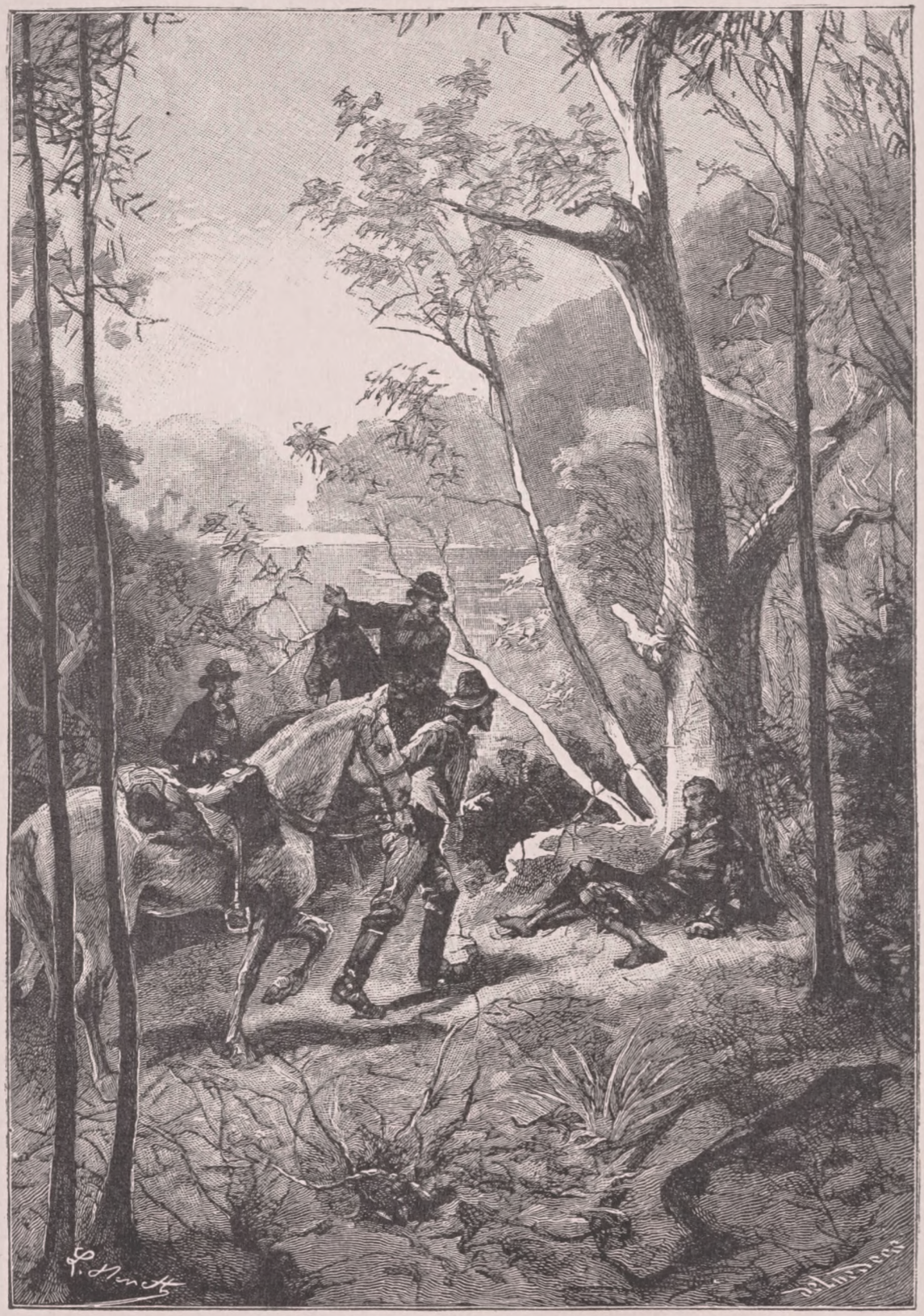
" If an opportunity presented itself to sell her," observed Mr. Andrew, " it is no doubt your intention ? "

" To sell her ? " interrupted Dolly ; " to sell her ? No, Mr. Andrew ; never ! "

Dolly and Zach Fren had exchanged glances ; they both had understood each other.

From this day forward, Dolly lived a very retired life at Prospect House, where she now had the various objects picked up on Browse Island : the utensils that the ship-wrecked men had used, the ship's lamp, the piece of sail nailed to the broken mast, the *Franklin's* bell, etc.

As to the *Dolly's Hope*, after being unloaded and brought



THEY PERCEIVED A MAN LYING AT THE FOOT OF A TREE (*p.* 167).

to a quiet nook in the harbor, she was left in Zach Fren's care. The crew, liberally rewarded, were now comfortably provided for, but if ever the ship was to put to sea again on a new expedition, every man of them could be relied on.

Meanwhile, Zach Fren's visits to Prospect House were frequent and welcome. Mrs. Branican delighted in chatting with him, and going over the incidents of the last expedition. Besides, the way in which both of them looked at things brought them daily nearer to each other. Neither of them believed that the last had been heard about the wreck of the missing ship, and Dolly would say to the boatswain :

"Zach Fren, neither John nor his eight companions are dead !"

"The eight men—I don't know," would the boatswain invariably reply. "But I am sure Captain John is alive !"

"Yes, he is alive ! But where can we look for him, Zach ? where is he, my poor John ?"

"He is wherever he is, and that's somewhere for sure, Mrs. Branican ! And if we don't go out for him, some day we'll hear from him ! I don't mean to say we'll get a letter, stamped and all, but hear of him we shall !"

"John is alive, Zach Fren !"

"If he wasn't, Mrs. Branican, do you tell me I'd ever have been able to save you ? Why, God would not have let me. No, he wouldn't. It would have been too cruel-like !"

And Zach Fren with his own way of putting things, and Mrs. Branican with the obstinacy she brought to bear on this question, were in perfect agreement to still preserve a hope which William Andrew, Captain Ellis, and indeed all their friends, had long since considered a forlorn hope.

During the year 1887 nothing occurred to bring back public attention on the *Franklin* disaster. Captain Ellis had gone to sea again in command of one of the firm's vessels. Mr. Andrew and Zach Fren were the only visitors received at the cottage. As to Mrs. Branican, her time was

devoted to the welfare of Wat House, and its orphan inmates.

By this time fifty poor little beings, some of them in infancy, others having attained the age of reason, were brought up in this home and daily visited by Mrs. Branican, ever solicitous of their health, their instruction, and their future prospects as well. The considerable sum appropriated to the keeping up of Wat House, allowed these little creatures to be made as happy as children can be who have lost their father or their mother. As they grew to an age when they could be put out as apprentices, Dolly placed them in the workshops, business houses, and dockyards of San Diego, and still continued to look after them. That very year three or four of them, sons of seamen, had embarked under the command of honest captains who could be trusted with their care. Setting out as cabin boys, they would begin their five years' apprenticeship when they were about thirteen years of age, then would rise to be seamen, then boatswains, and thus be sure of a good trade for their manhood, and relative comfort for their old age. And, indeed, as was shown in after years, Wat House was destined to become the nursery of those sailors who are an honor to the population of San Diego, and other ports on the Californian coast.

Besides watching over her orphanage, Mrs. Branican continued to be the benefactress of the poor. None ever knocked in vain at the door of Prospect House. The interests of her fortune, judiciously looked after by Mr. Andrew, were devoted to various works of charity of which the families of the *Franklin's* lost crew had the greatest share. And of that lost crew, did she not hope that one day some members would return?

It was the sole subject of her conversations with Zach Fren. What had become of the shipwrecked men whose bodies had not been found on Browse Island? Why might they not have managed to leave it in a boat made by them, de-

spite what Captain Ellis said to the contrary? True, so many years had now gone by, it seemed folly to keep on hoping still!

At night time especially, in her restless, dream-haunted sleep, Dolly would see John over and over again. He had been rescued from the wreck and picked up in some far-away sea. The vessel that had saved him was off the shore. John was in San Diego, and the extraordinary feature of these illusions was that, even upon her awakening, they persisted with such intensity that Dolly clung to them as to realities.

Nor was Fren's case different. To use his own words, those ideas had got hammered into his skull like the trenails into the timbers of a ship!

He, too, went on repeating to himself that only five out of fourteen of the castaways had been found, that the remainder might have left the island, that there was no proof that they had been unable to build a boat with the wreck of the *Franklin*.

What had become of them, all this time? That was the point. But Zach would not dwell upon it; and it was with dismay that William Andrew saw him thus encouraging Dolly in her illusions.

Was there no fear of this overexcitement for a brain that had once been unhinged already? But when Mr. Andrew went to remonstrate with the boatswain on the subject, the latter showed no sign of yielding.

"Mr. Andrew, sir," he would say, "did you ever see a sheet anchor give way when her flukes are strong, and she has got a good hold? Well, that's me!"

And time went on still. In 1890 fourteen years had passed since John Branican and the crew of the *Franklin* had left San Diego; Mrs. Branican was now thirty-seven. Although her hair began to whiten, and the freshness of her complexion had slightly faded, the same fire still kindled her eye as ever. She did not appear to have lost any of

her physical or moral strength, or any of her characteristic energy; they awaited but the opportunity to assert themselves.

Why was it no longer possible for her to follow Lady Franklin's example and fit up expedition after expedition, and spend her whole fortune in searching for John and his companions? But where were they to be looked for? Was it not the universal opinion that this maritime disaster had ended in the same way as the expedition led by the illustrious English admiral! Had not the sailors of the *Franklin* perished off Browse Island, just as the sailors of the *Erebus* and the *Terror* had perished amid the icebergs of the Arctic seas?

During these long years that had brought no light on the mysterious catastrophe, Mrs. Branican had not ceased making inquiries about Len and Jane Burker. No information whatever had been gathered in this connection either. No letter had ever reached San Diego. It was supposed that Len Burker had left America and had set up under another name, in some distant country. Another cause of grief added to the many sorrows of Jane's cousin. That ill-fated woman—Dolly was so fond of her, she would have been so happy to have her near her! Jane would have been a loving companion for her. But she was far away. Just as much lost for Dolly as was Captain John himself!

The first half of the year 1890 had rolled by, when a San Diego newspaper reprinted, in its issue of the 26th of July, a paragraph, the effect of which was to be far reaching, one may say, on the two continents.

It was an extract from an Australian paper, the *Morning Herald*, of Sydney, and ran as follows:

It may be remembered that the late search, undertaken seven years ago by the *Dolly's Hope*, with a view to find the survivors of the *Franklin* proved unsuccessful. Since that time it was supposed that all the shipwrecked crew had perished either before reaching Browse Island or after leaving it.

Now, the question is far from being solved.

For one of the officers of the *Franklin*, Harry Felton, Captain Branican's mate, has just arrived in Sydney. He was picked up on the banks of the Parru, an affluent of the Darling, almost on the border of New South Wales and Queensland, and brought to Sydney. But he is in such a state of weakness that no information has, thus far, been obtained from him, and it is to be feared he may die from one day to another.

We hasten to make the above known for the benefit of those interested in the *Franklin* disaster.

On July 27, as soon as William Andrew heard the news, which had been wired to him from San Francisco, he hastened to Prospect House, where Zach Fren happened to be at the time.

"I'm off to Sydney," simply remarked Mrs. Branican, on receiving the intelligence.

"To Sydney?" asked Mr. Andrew.

"Certainly," answered Dolly.

And turning toward the boatswain:

"Will you come with me, Zach?"

"Anywhere you like, Mrs. Branican."

"Is the *Dolly's Hope* ready to put to sea?"

"No," replied Mr. Andrew, "and it would take three weeks to get her ready."

"Before three weeks I must be in Sydney! Is there a steamer starting for Australia soon?"

"The *Oregon* leaves San Francisco this very night."

"Zach and I will be in San Francisco this evening."

"My dear Dolly," said Mr. Andrew, "may God restore John to you!"

"He *will* restore him to me!" replied Mrs Branican.

And that very night, about eleven o'clock, a special train chartered by Mrs. Branican landed her and Zach Fren in the capital of California.

At one o'clock in the morning the *Oregon* was steaming out of San Francisco, bound for Sydney.

CHAPTER XVI.

HARRY FELTON.

THE weather was splendid—a normal condition in this part of the Pacific and at this time of the year.

"Wouldn't you think the good ship knows Mrs. Branican would like to be on the other side already?" Zach Fren would often say, as the *Oregon* sped onward at an average of seventeen knots.

Needless to state that the officers, passengers, and crew showed this courageous woman that respectful sympathy to which her misfortunes and her bravery entitled her so justly.

When the steamer reached 33° 51′ latitude south, and 148° 40′ longitude east, the ever welcome cry of "land," came from the lookout. And on the 15th of August, after a trip of 7000 miles, covered in nineteen days, the *Oregon* entered the bay of Port Jackson, between those high slatey cliffs, that look like a giant gateway opening on the Pacific.

Then leaving to the right and left those little gulfs, dotted with villas and cottages, and bearing the names of Watson, Vaucluse, Rose, Double, Elizabeth, etc., she passed on before Earme Love and Sydney Love, and steamed into Darling Harbor, which is, in reality, the port of Sydney.

Mrs. Branican accosted the first person who came on board; it was a custom house officer:

"Harry Felton?" she began.

"He is still alive," replied that official, guessing who the inquirer was.

For did not all Sydney know that she was coming over on the *Oregon*, and was she not expected with the greatest impatience?

"Where is he?" she asked.

"At the Seamen's Hospital."

In a moment Mrs. Branican and her companion were ashore, and a few minutes' ride brought them to the hospital, where they were received by the doctor in charge.

"Has Harry Felton been able to speak yet? Has he recovered consciousness?" inquired Dolly.

"No, madam," replied the doctor. "The unfortunate man does not recognize anybody. He seems unable to utter a word. Death may carry him off at any moment!"

"He must not die!" cried Mrs. Branican. "He alone knows whether Captain John and his companions are still alive! He alone can tell where they are! I came purposely to see him."

"I will conduct you to him immediately, madam," answered the doctor; and so saying he showed the two visitors to the room occupied by the dying man.

Six weeks before, some travelers were crossing the province of Ulakarara, in New South Wales, on the lower border of Queensland. On reaching the left bank of the Parru, they perceived a man lying at the foot of a tree. He was covered with rags, and so worn out with fatigue and hunger that they were unable to bring him back to his senses, nor could they ever have identified him had not his commission as an officer in the merchant navy been found in one of his pockets.

It was Harry Felton, the second officer of the *Franklin.*

Whence had he come? What distant or unknown part of the Australian Continent had he started from? How long had he been wandering about the wild solitudes of the central deserts? Had he been made prisoner by the natives, and had he managed to escape from them? Where had he left his companions if he had any? Or again, was he the only survivor of the disaster which now dated fourteen

years back? All these questions had remained to this moment unanswered.

Still, it was of vast importance to know where Harry Felton came from, what he had done since the wreck of the *Franklin* on the reefs of Browse Island; to know in fact the secret of the catastrophe.

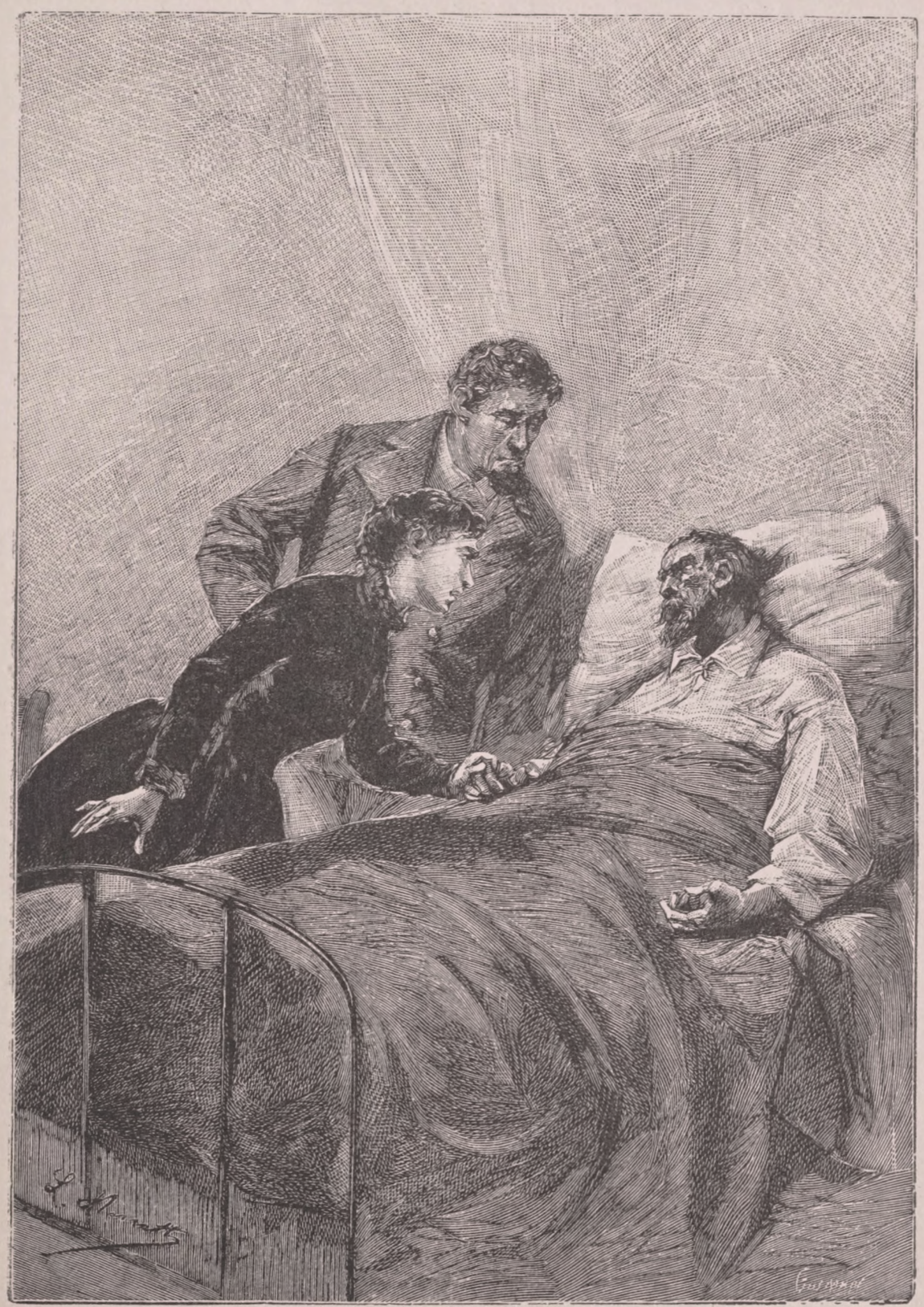
He was brought to the nearest station, which was that of Okley, and thence by rail to Sydney. The *Morning Herald*, being the first to hear of his arrival in the Australian capital, had published it; and now Mrs. Branican stood beside him.

She never would have recognized her husband's late lieutenant. He was then but forty-six years old, but he looked sixty. And this was the only man—a corpse almost—who could say what had become of Captain John and his crew.

Hitherto the most assiduous care had failed to bring about any improvement in the sick man's condition—a condition, the sad result evidently of the terrible hardships he had suffered during the weeks, the months, perhaps, of his journey across central Australia. The breath of life that still lingered in him might vanish in a swoon at any moment. Since his admission into the hospital, he had hardly opened his eyes, and had given no sign that he was conscious of what was going on around him. He was sustained with a little food, of which he did not even appear to take notice. It was to be feared that excessive sufferings had ruined his intellectual powers, and destroyed the faculty of his memory on which might hang the fate of the remaining survivors.

Mrs. Branican had posted herself at his bedside, watching for a glance of his eye, for the faintest murmur that might escape his lips, the least indication she might work upon! Zach Fren, standing near her, in vain tried to descry a glimmer of intelligence in his face, even as a sailor looks for a ray of light through the misty clouds away on the horizon.

But the gleam he sought did not appear that day, or the



BY THE DYING MAN'S BEDSIDE (*p.* 168).

day following. The eyelids of the sick man remained closed, and when Dolly raised them she only met with an unconscious stare.

She did not despair, however, or Zach Fren either, and the latter would keep on repeating :

" If Harry Felton recognizes his captain's wife, he will easily make himself understood, even without speaking !"

Yes ! it was of importance that he should recognize Mrs. Branican ; indeed, it might be beneficial for him to do so. It would then be necessary to act with extreme prudence, until he got accustomed to Dolly's presence. Little by little, recollections of the *Franklin* would come to his mind. He would be able to show by signs what he could not utter in words.

Although Mrs. Branican was advised not to remain continuously in the closed sick room, she denied herself even one hour's respite, to go out for a little fresh air. Away from this bedside she could not tear herself.

" He may die," she would say, " and if with his last breath he exhales the one word I long for, I must be there to hear it. I will not leave him ! "

Toward evening a slight change for the better was noticed in the poor fellow's condition. He opened his eyes several times, but their gaze did not rest on Mrs. Branican. And yet, bending over him, she called him by his name ; she repeated John's name—the captain of the *Franklin ;* San Diego ! How did these names fail to bring back memories of his companions to his mind ? One word—a single word —was all that was asked of him : " *Alive.* Were they *alive ?* "

And all that Felton must have suffered to be reduced to such a state, Dolly thought to herself that John must have suffered also. Then she would imagine that John, too, had succumbed on the way. But no—John could not have accompanied his mate. He had remained with the others—

where? Was it with some tribe of the Australian coast? What tribe was it? Harry alone could tell, and it seemed that his intelligence was a blank, and his lips had forgotten the use of speech.

During the night Felton still grew weaker. His eyes no longer opened, his hand got colder, as though the little life still left in him was withdrawing toward the heart. Was he going to die without saying a single word?

Then Dolly remembered that she, too, had lost her memory and her reason for a good many years! And even as others were unable to obtain a word from her then, she could now draw nothing from this unhappy man—nothing of what he alone knew!

The following day, the doctor, very uneasy at the utter prostration of his patient, tried the most energetic means to arouse him, but without any avail. Death was now approaching fast.

So then Mrs. Branican was doomed to see crushed, like the others, the hopes that this man's reappearance had led her to cherish! To the light that he might have shed would succeed a darkness that nothing could henceforth dispel! And then all would be over forever.

At Dolly's request, the principal doctors of the town had met in consultation. But, after examining the patient, they declared themselves powerless.

"Then you can do nothing for this unfortunate man?" asked Mrs. Branican.

"Nothing," replied one of the medical men.

"Not give him back one minute's intelligence, one minute's recollection?"

And for that one minute how gladly she would have laid down all the wealth she possessed!

But what is beyond man's power can be done by God. When human resources fail, it is to him man should apply.

When the doctors had retired, Dolly knelt down by the

bedside, and when Zach came in he found her in prayer near the dying man.

Suddenly, as he stooped over to see if Harry Felton still breathed, he called out :

" Mrs. Branican ! "

Dolly, thinking the boatswain had found but a corpse in the bed, sprang to her feet.

" Dead ? " she murmured.

" No, madam ; no ! Look at him. His eyes are opened. He is looking about."

In truth, beneath the uplifted eyelids Harry Felton's eyes sparkled with an extraordinary gleam. His cheeks had colored slightly, and his hands moved several times. He seemed to emerge out of that stupor in which he had been buried so long. Then, his gaze falling on Mrs. Branican, a half smile lit up his features.

" He knows me ! " cried Dolly.

" Of course he does," said Zach Fren loudly, as though talking for the benefit of the sick man. " It's his captain's wife is beside him and he knows it. He is going to speak to her now ! "

" And if he is unable to speak, God grant that he may be able to make himself understood ! "

Then, taking Felton's hand, who feebly pressed hers in return, Dolly stooped close to him.

" John ? John ? " she asked.

A moving of the eyes showed that Felton had heard and understood her.

" Alive ? " she asked.

" Yes ! "

That " yes," although so feebly uttered, had fallen clear and distinct on Dolly's ear !

CHAPTER XVII.

BY "YES" AND BY "NO"!

MRS. BRANICAN immediately called in the doctor. He saw plainly that this change in Harry Felton's intellectual condition was but a last flicker of life, that death would soon destroy.

The dying man, as a matter of fact, appeared to see no one but Mrs. Branican. Neither Zach Fren nor the doctor attracted his attention. All that was left him of intellectual power was concentrated on the wife of his captain, the wife of John Branican.

"Harry Felton," asked Dolly, "if John is alive, where did you leave him? Where is he?"

No answer came forth.

"He is unable to speak," said the doctor, "but he might be able to reply by signs, perhaps."

"If only by his look, I will manage to understand him!" said Mrs. Branican.

"Wait a bit, madam," suggested Zach Fren. "You know there's a way of asking questions. We sailors understand each other with half a nod; so if you'd let me have a try at him while you hold his hand, and please keep your eye on his all the time, I'll put him through his lesson and he'll give us a 'yes' or a 'no' with a wink; that will be enough, won't it?"

Mrs. Branican stooped over the dying man and took his hand in hers.

Had Fren straightway asked him where Captain John was, he could not possibly have obtained a satisfactory answer, since the mate would have had to pronounce the name of some country, some province, or village—which in all probability he could not do. Much better was it to get at the answer gradually by following up the history of the

Franklin from the day on which she had been seen for the last time, up to the day when Harry Felton left his captain.

"Felton," began Fren, in a clear voice, "it's Mrs. Branican is here by you, the wife of John Branican, captain of the *Franklin.* You know her, don't you?"

Felton's lips did not move, but a slight motion of his eyelids, a faint pressure of his hand, replied in the affirmative.

"The *Franklin,*" continued Zach Fren, "was signaled, for the last time, south of Celebes Island. Do you hear? You understand me, don't you, Felton?"

Another token of assent.

"Well, now listen to me, and according as you open your eyes or shut them I will know if what I say is the correct thing or not."

It was evident the patient had understood the sailor's request.

"On leaving the Java Sea," the latter went on, "Captain John made for Timor Sea?"

"Yes."

"By the Sunda Strait?"

"Yes."

"Of his own accord?"

This question was answered by a sign, the negative meaning of which could not be misunderstood.

"Of course he didn't of his own accord!" repeated Zach.

This was exactly what Captain Ellis and himself had thought. For the *Franklin* to have left the Java Sea to enter the Timor Sea, she must have been compelled to do so.

"It was during a storm?" inquired Zach Fren.

"Yes."

"A violent tornado, that took you by surprise in the Java Sea, no doubt?"

"Yes."

"And carried you right through the Sunda Strait?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps the *Franklin* was disabled, her masts gone, her helm broken?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Branican, her eyes fixed on Felton, looked at him without saying a word.

Zach Fren endeavored to trace up the various stages of the catastrophe, and continued:

"Captain John could not take his observations for several days, and in the end he did not know where he was?"

"Yes."

"And after being swept along for some few days right away to the west of Timor Sea, he was dashed against the reefs of Browse Island?"

A slight movement showed Harry Felton's surprise, as he was evidently ignorant of the name of the island on which the *Franklin* had been thrown, and of which they had been unable to determine the exact position by the observations taken in the Timor Sea.

Zach Fren continued:

"When you put to sea from San Diego, there were on board, Captain John, yourself Harry Felton, and twelve men composing the crew, fourteen all told. Were you fourteen after the wreck of the *Franklin?*"

"No."

"Some of the men perished when the ship struck the rocks then?"

"Yes."

"One? Two?"

A nod confirmed the last of these figures.

So two of their number were missing when the shipwrecked men set foot on Browse Island.

On the advice of the doctor a little rest was now

given the invalid; this interrogation was visibly tiring him.

Then the questions being resumed a few minutes later, Zach Fren ascertained how Captain John, Harry Felton, and their ten companions had been able to provide for their sustenance. But for a portion of the cargo consisting of preserved meat and flour, that had been rescued along the shore, but for the fish that had soon become one of their chief resources, the castaways would have died of hunger. Seldom had they descried any vessels passing off the island. Their flag nailed to the mast had never been noticed. And yet they had no other means of escape but that of being picked up by some vessel.

When Zach Fren asked how long they had remained on Browse Island—one year—two years—three years—six years—Felton did not answer "yes" until the last of these numbers had been suggested.

So, from 1875 to 1881, Captain John and his comrades had lived on that island! But how had they succeeded in leaving it? That was one of the most interesting points, and it was approached in this way:

"Were you able to build a boat with the wreck of the ship?"

"No."

Both Captain Ellis and the boatswain had agreed on this, also, when they were exploring the scene of the wreck; it would not have been possible to build even a canoe with those débris.

At this part of his interrogatory, Zach Fren was somewhat puzzled as to how he should put the questions about the manner in which the survivors had been enabled to leave Browse Island.

"You say," he continued, "that no vessel saw your signals?"

"No."

"Did a praō from the Malay Islands, or a boatful of Australian natives, come to the island, then?"

"No."

"Then it was a sloop—a ship's boat that was carried ashore?"

"Yes."

"A drifting boat?"

"Yes."

This point being at last settled, it was easy for the sailor to deduct the natural consequences.

"So you patched up the boat and made her fit to put to sea?"

"Yes."

"And Captain John made for the nearest coast to the leeward, of course?"

"Yes."

But why had not Captain John and his companions all embarked in this boat? This was another important item to know.

"No doubt this boat was too small to hold twelve passengers?" asked Zach Fren.

"Yes."

"So seven of you went off: Captain John, you, and five of the men?"

"Yes."

And now it was easy to read in the eyes of the dying man that those who had remained on Browse Island might be still waiting to be rescued.

But, on a sign from Dolly, Zach refrained from telling him that the five sailors had succumbed since the captain had left the island.

A rest of some few minutes was again allowed the poor fellow, who had closed his eyes, although he still pressed Mrs. Branican's hand in his.

Meanwhile, carried away in thought to Browse Island,

she saw John attempting impossibilities even to save his men. She heard him, she spoke to him, she encouraged him, she embarked with him. Where had this boat landed?

Harry Felton's eyes reopened, and Fren continued his questioning.

"So that's how Captain John, you, and five of the men left Browse Island?"

"Yes."

"And the boat was set due east, so as to reach the nearest land to the island?"

"Yes."

"That was Australia, I guess?"

"Yes."

"Were you thrown on the coast by a storm when you got across?"

"No."

"You were able to run up one of the creeks on the coast?"

"Yes."

"Round about Cape Lévêque, most likely?"

"Yes."

"At York Sund, may be?"

"Yes."

"On landing did you fall into the hands of the natives?"

"Yes."

"And they carried you off?"

"Yes."

"All of you?"

"No."

"Some of your men perished as you landed at York Sund?"

"Yes."

"Killed by the natives?"

"Yes."

"One—two—three—four?"

"Yes."

"There were only three of you left, then, when the natives brought you into the interior of the continent?"

"Yes."

"Captain John, you, and one of the seaman?"

"Yes."

"And this sailor, is he still with Captain John?"

"No."

"He died before you left?"

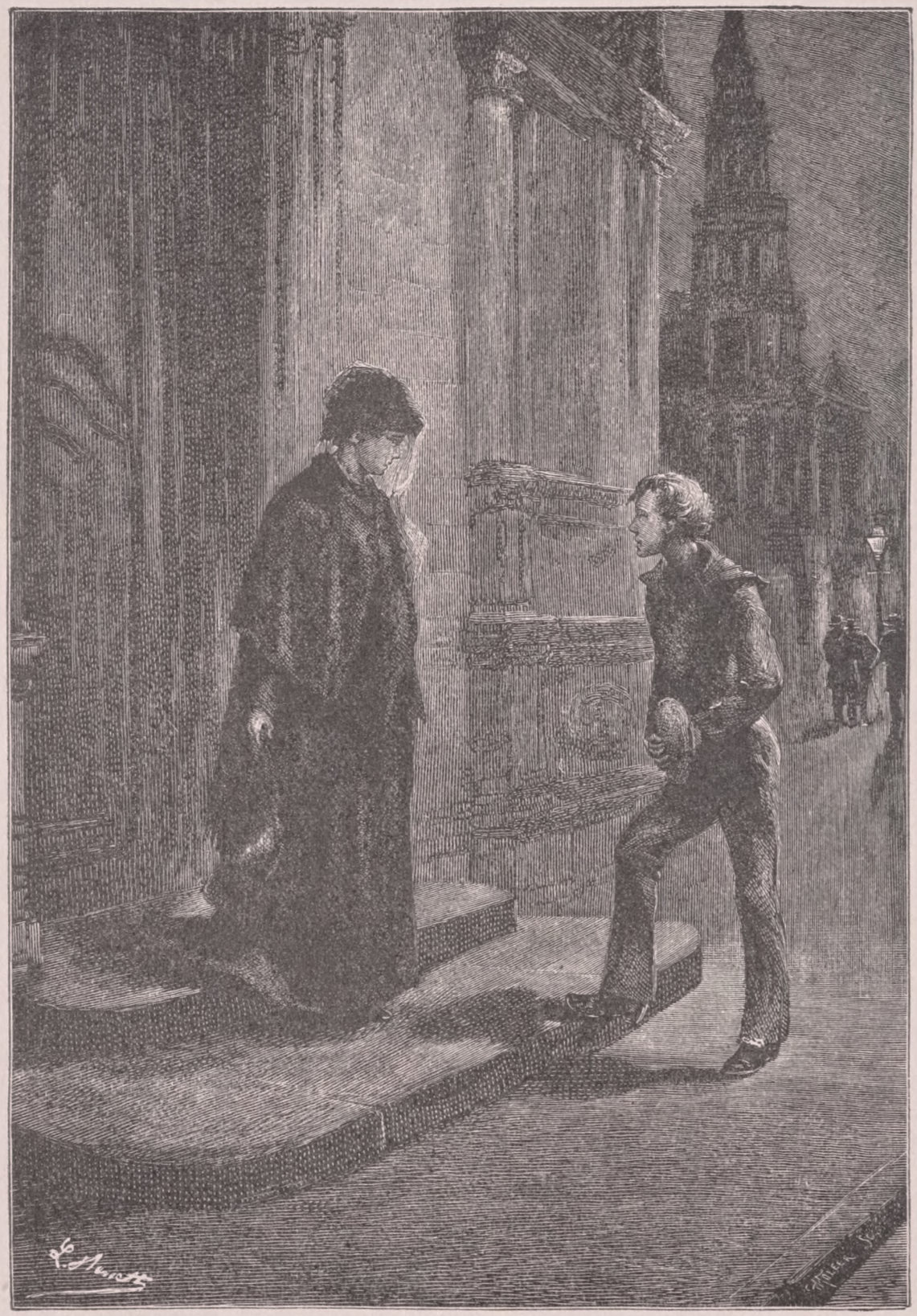
"Yes."

"A long time?"

"Yes."

So then, Captain John and this same Harry Felton were actually the only two survivors of the *Franklin*, and one of them had only a few more hours to live!

It was no easy task to get the moribund to give further explanations about Captain John—explanations that should be obtained with the greatest precision. More than once Zach Fren was obliged to cease questioning him; then, when he would begin again, Mrs. Branican made him put question after question so as to know what had taken place during these nine years, that is to say since the day Captain John and Harry Felton were carried off by the natives. It was ascertained that they were Australian nomads. The prisoners had been obliged to follow them about in their incessant wanderings across the Tasmanian territories, leading the most miserable of lives. Why had they been spared? Was it to get some special service out of them, or, if the opportunity presented itself, to obtain a large ransom for them from the British authorities? Yes—and this very important fact was distinctly stated by Felton. It would be then but a mere matter of ransom if these natives could be found. Further questions revealed that Captain John and Harry Felton had been so closely watched that



SHE WAS STOPPED BY A LAD WAITING AT THE DOOR (*p.* 180).

during those nine years they had not had one chance of escape.

At last the opportunity came. A place of meeting had been chosen, where the two captives were to join so as to escape together; but something had prevented Captain John coming to the rendezvous; that something Harry Felton was unable to find out. He had waited there several days, unwilling as he was to escape by himself; he then tried to rejoin the tribe; they had raised their camp. So, fully determined to come back and rescue his captain, should he be able to reach one of the villages of the interior, he started across the central deserts, hiding here and there so as not to fall again into the hands of the natives, prostrated with the heat, and dying of hunger and fatigue. For six months he had journeyed on in that way, until at last he fell unconscious on the banks of the Parru, on the southern border of Queensland.

It was there, as we know, that he had been identified, thanks to the papers he had on him. From there he had been brought to Sydney, where his life had been prolonged by a miracle, until he was able to make known what had been sought after in vain for so many years.

Besides him, then, out of the whole crew, Captain John was the only man alive now; but he was held captive by a wandering tribe which scoured the deserts of Tasmania.

And as Zach Fren named, one by one, the various tribes who generally frequent these territories, it was on hearing the name of the Indras that Harry Felton gave his nod of assent. Zach Fren was even able to ascertain that during the winter this tribe usually encamped on the banks of the Fitz-Roy River, one of the streams that flow into the Lévêque Gulf, to the northwest of the Australian continent.

"That is where we will go look for John!" exclaimed Mrs. Branican. "That is where we will find him!"

Felton understood her, for his face brightened at the thought that Captain John would at last be saved—saved by her.

The poor fellow's mission was now accomplished. Mrs. Branican, who had received his last confidences, knew in what part of the Australian continent she should make her researches, and he closed his eyes as though he had nothing more to say.

Such was the condition to which this robust and courageous man had been reduced through hunger and fatigue, and, above all, the terrible effects of the Australian climate. And now, after confronting them all, he was dying, just as his sufferings had come to an end! Was not this the fate that awaited Captain John, should he attempt to escape across the wilderness of central Australia? Did not his fate likewise threaten those who would start in search of this Indras tribe?

But this thought did not even enter Mrs. Branican's head. While the *Oregon* was bringing her across, she had drawn out the plan of a new expedition; all that was now wanted was to carry it into execution.

Harry Felton died about nine o'clock that evening. One last time Dolly had called him by his name. Once again he had understood her. His eyes had opened, and this feeble whisper escaped his lips:

"Cap'n John!"

Then a few dying gasps convulsed his chest, and his heart ceased to beat.

That night, as Mrs. Branican was leaving the hospital she was stopped by a lad who was waiting at the door.

He was an apprentice in the merchant navy, serving his time on the *Brisbane*, which traded along the Australian coast between Sydney and Adelaide.

"Mrs. Branican," said he in a trembling voice.

"What is it, my boy?" asked Dolly.

"Harry Felton is dead, is he?"

"He is dead,"

"And Captain John?"

"As for him, *he* is alive! *He* is alive!"

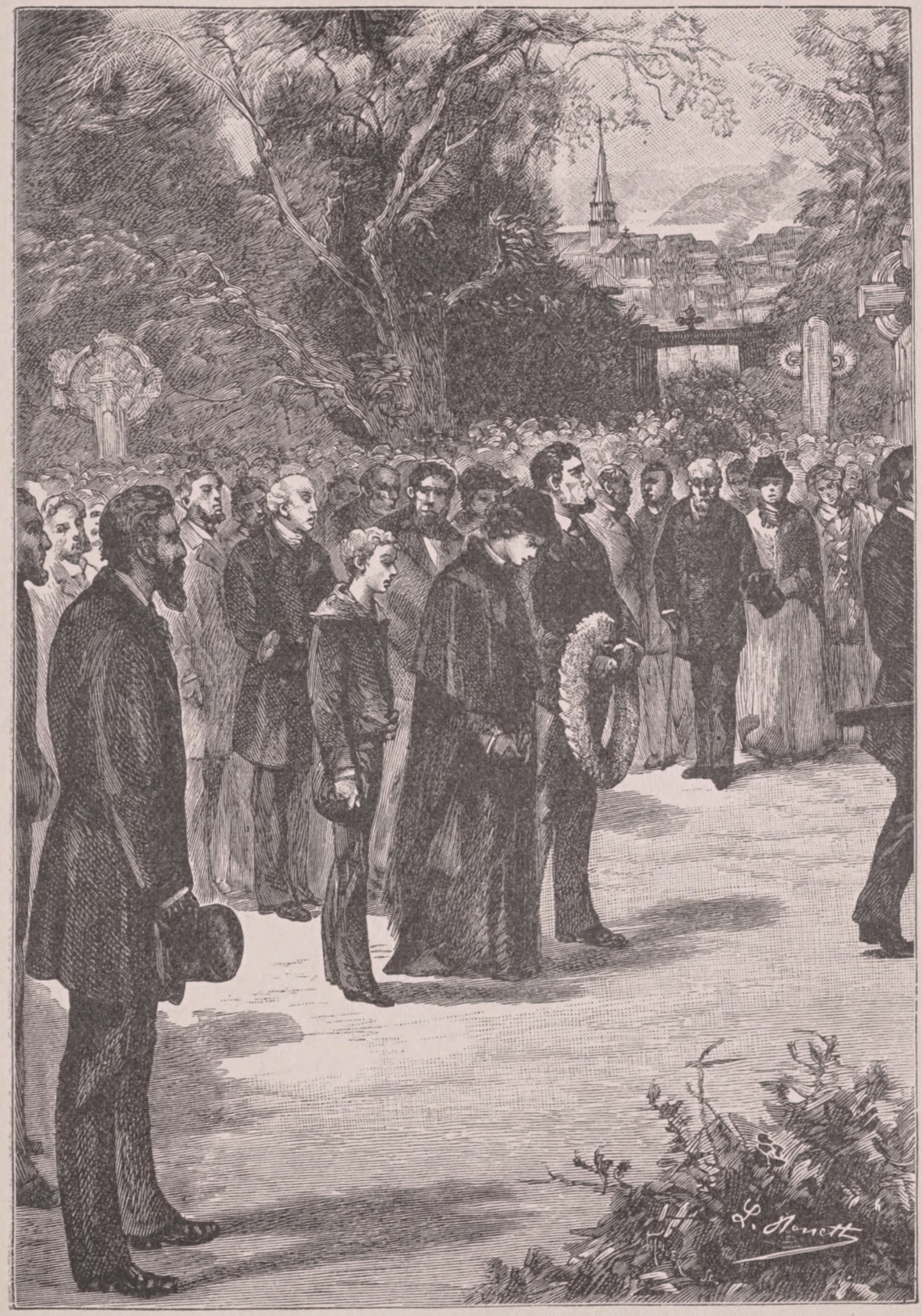
"Thank you, madam," said the young apprentice.

Dolly had scarcely got a glimpse of the features of the young boy ere he was gone without saying who he was or why he had asked those questions.

The following day Harry Felton's funeral took place, attended by the sailors in the harbor and a large concourse of the inhabitants.

Needless to say that Mrs. Branican paid her last duty behind the hearse of one who had been Captain John's devoted companion and faithful friend; and by her side walked the young sailor; but she did not recognize him among all those who had come to pay this last honor to the second officer of the *Franklin*.

END OF PART I.



THE FOLLOWING DAY HARRY FELTON'S FUNERAL TOOK PLACE (*p.* 181).

MISTRESS BRANICAN.

PART II.

MISTRESS BRANICAN.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

WITH FULL STEAM ON.

EVER since the day when Mr. de Lesseps cut the Suez Canal, one has been justified in calling the African continent an island. In the same way North and South America may be denominated islands by and by, when the Panama Canal is completed, as these immense territories will in reality be surrounded by water on all sides. But as they will keep the name of continents, on account of their size, it is but right to give this same designation to Australia (otherwise New Holland) which is situated in the same conditions.

As a matter of fact, Australia measures 3900 kilometers in its greatest length from east to west, and 3200 in its greatest width from north to south. Now, the summing up of these two figures gives a surface of about 4,830,000 square kilometers—say seven-ninths of the area of Europe.

The Australian continent is divided, by the authors of the latest atlases, into seven provinces, separated by arbitrary lines, which intersect each other at right angles and take no account of orographic or hydrographic accidents.

In the east, in the most populated part, Queensland, capital Brisbane; New South Wales, capital Sydney; Victoria, capital Melbourne.

In the center, North Australia and Alexandra Land, without capitals; South Australia, capital Adelaide.

In the west, Western Australia, stretching from north to south, capital Perth.

It is right to add that the Australians are endeavoring to constitute a confederation under the name of "Commonwealth of Australia." The English government objects to this title, but no doubt it will become a natural consequence on the day when the severance is an accomplished fact.

The reader will soon see into what provinces, the most dangerous and the least known of this continent, Mrs. Branican was about venturing, with that vague hope, that almost unrealizable idea of finding Captain John, and rescuing him from the tribe that had held him a prisoner for nine years. Indeed, was there not every reason to apprehend that the Indians had killed him after Harry Felton's escape?

Mrs. Branican's plan was to leave Sydney as soon as possible. She could rely on Zach Fren's boundless devotion; on the firm and practical intelligence which characterized him. In the course of a long conversation, and with the map of Australia before them, they had both discussed the readiest ways and means that could insure the success of this new undertaking. The selection of a starting point, as can well be imagined, was of extreme importance, and this is what was definitely agreed upon:

First, a caravan, equipped in the best manner for exploration and for defense, and supplied with all the necessaries for a journey across the deserts of central Australia, would be organized at the expense and under the management of Mrs. Branican.

Second. As this exploration should be started within a very short delay, it was advisable to take the quickest route by land or sea to the farthest terminal point of the ordinary means of communication between the coast and the center of the continent.

In the first place, the question of reaching the northwest coast, that is to say, that part of Tasmania where the survivors of the *Franklin* had landed, was brought forward and discussed. But this detour would have necessitated an enormous waste of time, and placed great difficulties in the way of the *personnel* and of the baggage, both of which were of necessity to be considerable. Moreover, all things considered, there was no evidence that by entering the Australian continent by the west, the rescuing party would the sooner come across the natives who had captured Captain Branican, for they roamed about through Alexandra Land just as well as in Western Australia. This question was therefore set aside.

The second point taken up for consideration was the direction to be adopted from the first start; here the road followed by Harry Felton naturally suggested itself. To be sure, they had no very definite information regarding his itinerary; yet it was indicated by the spot where he had been picked up; that is to say, on the banks of the Parru, between Queensland and New South Wales, to the northwest of the latter.

Since 1770—when Captain Cook explored New South Wales, and, in the name of the King of England, took possession of this continent, already explored at that time by the Portuguese Manuel Godenbho and by the Dutch Verschoor, Hartog, Carpenter, and Tasman—its eastern portion had been largely colonized, developed, and civilized. It was in 1787 that, Pitt being then prime minister, Commodore Philip founded here the Botany Bay penal station, out of which a nation of almost three million men was to spring up in less than a century.

At the present time, roads, canals, and railroads connect the numberless localities of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia; lines of steamers ply between all the ports and harbors along the coast; none of those

elements which constitute the greatness and wealth of an old country are wanting to this part of the continent.

Now, as Mrs. Branican was in Sydney, this rich and populous capital would have supplied her with all that could be needed for the fitting out of a caravan, the more so as before leaving San Diego she had got a considerable credit opened for her, through William Andrew, on the Central Australian Bank. She could easily, therefore, have obtained here the men and the various kinds of cattle for riding, drawing, or burden-carrying that might be required for her expedition, even though it implied the crossing of the whole breadth of the continent; say, a journey of close on 2200 miles.

Still, was Sydney to be adopted as the starting point? Everything considered, and on the advice of the American Consul, who was well acquainted with the present state of Australian geography, Adelaide, the capital (as we have said) of South Australia, seemed a more suitable basis of operations.

By the side of the telegraph wires that run from this city to Van Diemen's Bay, that is to say, from south to north, almost, along the curve of the 139th meridian, the engineers had constructed the first portion of a railroad which even now went beyond the parallel reached by poor Harry Felton. This road would enable the travelers to push farther and quicker into those regions of Alexandra Land and Western Australia, hitherto almost unexplored.

So, then, it was determined that this third expedition in quest of Captain John would be organized at Adelaide, and would thence proceed by rail as far as the line extended, say a distance northward of 400 miles.

And now, how would Mrs. Branican make her way from Sydney to Adelaide? Had there been railway communications between these two capitals her course would have been clear. To be sure, there is a railroad which crosses the

Murray on the frontier line of Victoria, at Albury Station, goes on by way of Benalla and Kilmore as far as Melbourne, and thence proceeds in the direction of Adelaide; but it went no farther than Horsham Station, and beyond this point the lack of ordinary means of communication might have caused considerable delays.

Hence it was that Mrs. Branican made up her mind to reach Adelaide by sea. Four days is the normal length of the trip, and taking into account a stoppage of forty-eight hours at Melbourne, she should land at the chief city of South Australia within six days. True, it was now August, a month which corresponds to February in the northern hemisphere. Still, the weather was set fair, and as the winds blew from the northwest the steamer would be sheltered by the coast as soon as she had rounded Bass's Strait. Besides, after her voyage from San Francisco to Sydney, a trip from Sydney to Adelaide was not of a nature to cause Mrs. Branican any anxiety.

It so happened the steamer *Brisbane* was starting the next day, at eleven o'clock at night. After calling at Melbourne, it was due at Adelaide on the morning of August 27. Two cabins were reserved on it, and Mrs. Branican took the necessary steps to transfer to the Bank of Adelaide the credit that had been opened for her at the Bank of Sydney. The directors obligingly put themselves at her service, and this transfer was effected without the least difficulty.

On leaving the Seamen's Hospital, Mrs. Branican had taken a suite of rooms in a hotel, where she would stay until her departure. One thought filled her mind: "John is alive!" With eyes fastened on the map of Australia, her gaze lost in those immense solitudes of the center and of the northwest, a prey to the delirium of her imagination, she saw herself looking for him—finding him—saving him!

On that day, at the closing of their interview, Zach Fren,

thinking it better for her to be alone, had started for a ramble about the streets of Sydney, with which he was not at all acquainted. And first of all—what else could you expect of a sailor?—he thought he would like to see the *Brisbane*, so as to make sure that Mrs. Branican would have comfortable quarters. The vessel appeared to him all that could be desired for a coaster. He asked to see the cabin that had been reserved for his mistress; he was shown to it by a young apprentice, and gave some instructions with a view to make it brighter and more pleasant. Kind-hearted fellow! One would have thought it was a question of a long sea voyage!

As he was about to leave the boat, the young apprentice stopped him, and with a slight tremble in his voice, he asked:

"It's quite settled, is it, bos'n, that Mrs. Branican is to sail for Adelaide to-morrow?"

"Oh, yes; to-morrow," answered Zach Fren.

"On board the *Brisbane?*"

"Well, of course."

"May she have good luck this time, and find Captain John!"

"We'll do our best, you bet!"

"I'm sure you will, bos'n."

"Do you belong to this boat?"

"I do, sir."

"Well, then, sonny, you'll see us to-morrow."

Zach Fren spent his last few hours in Sydney in strolling about Pitt Street and York Street, viewing the reddish-yellow stone buildings, then visiting Victoria Park and Hyde Park, in which stands the monument erected to the memory of Captain Cook. He rambled through the Botanical Garden, a beautiful promenade close to the seashore, where may be admired the various trees of hot climates as well as those of the temperate zones—the oak and the

THE YOUNG APPRENTICE STOPPED HIM (*p.* 190).

arancaria, the cactus and the mangostan, the palm tree and the olive tree. Truly, Sydney deserves the reputation it has made for itself. It is the oldest of the Australian capitals, and if it is less regularly built than its younger sisters, Adelaide and Melbourne, it shows itself richer in unforeseen beauties and picturesque sites.

The next evening Mrs. Branican and Zach Fren went on board the steamer. At eleven o'clock the *Brisbane* wended its way out of the port, steamed across Port Jackson Bay, and after rounding Inner South Head turned due south, while keeping within a few miles from the coast.

During the first hour Dolly remained seated abaft of the deck, watching the outline of the coast, which was just visible through the mist. There, then, was the continent into which she was about plunging as though into an immense prison, whence John had been hitherto unable to escape. It was now fourteen years since they had parted from each other.

"Fourteen years!" she murmured.

When Botany Bay and Jorris Bay had been passed she went below for a little rest. But next day at daybreak she was up, at the time when Mount Dromedary and, a little to the rear, Mount Kosciusko, an outgrowth of the Australian Alps, could be seen on the horizon.

Zach Fren joined her on the spar-deck, and both naturally turned to the only topic which preoccupied them.

Just then an apprentice approached the little group, with a look of hesitation, and said that the captain had sent him to ask if Mrs. Branican desired anything.

"No, my boy; thank you," answered Dolly.

"Why! that's the lad who spoke to me yesterday when I came to have a look at the *Brisbane*," said Zach Fren.

"Yes, bos'n; you are right."

"And what do they call you?"

"My name is Godfrey."

"Well, then, Godfrey, you are quite sure now that Mrs. Branican is aboard your steamer, are you? And you look pleased at it, too!"

"Yes, sir; we are all pleased on board. And we all hope that she will have good luck and save Captain John!"

While speaking, Godfrey looked at her with such intense earnestness that a thrill went through her whole frame. The next moment the young apprentice's voice seemed to strike her. She had heard that voice somewhere before, and suddenly she thought she remembered where.

"My boy," said she, "was it not you who spoke to me at the door of the hospital at Sydney?"

"It was I, ma'am."

"You belong to the *Brisbane*, then?"

"Yes, ma'am. I've been aboard a whole year now," replied Godfrey. "But, please Heaven, I will soon leave it."

Whereupon, unwilling, or perhaps afraid to say more, Godfrey withdrew, to give Mrs. Branican's answer to his captain.

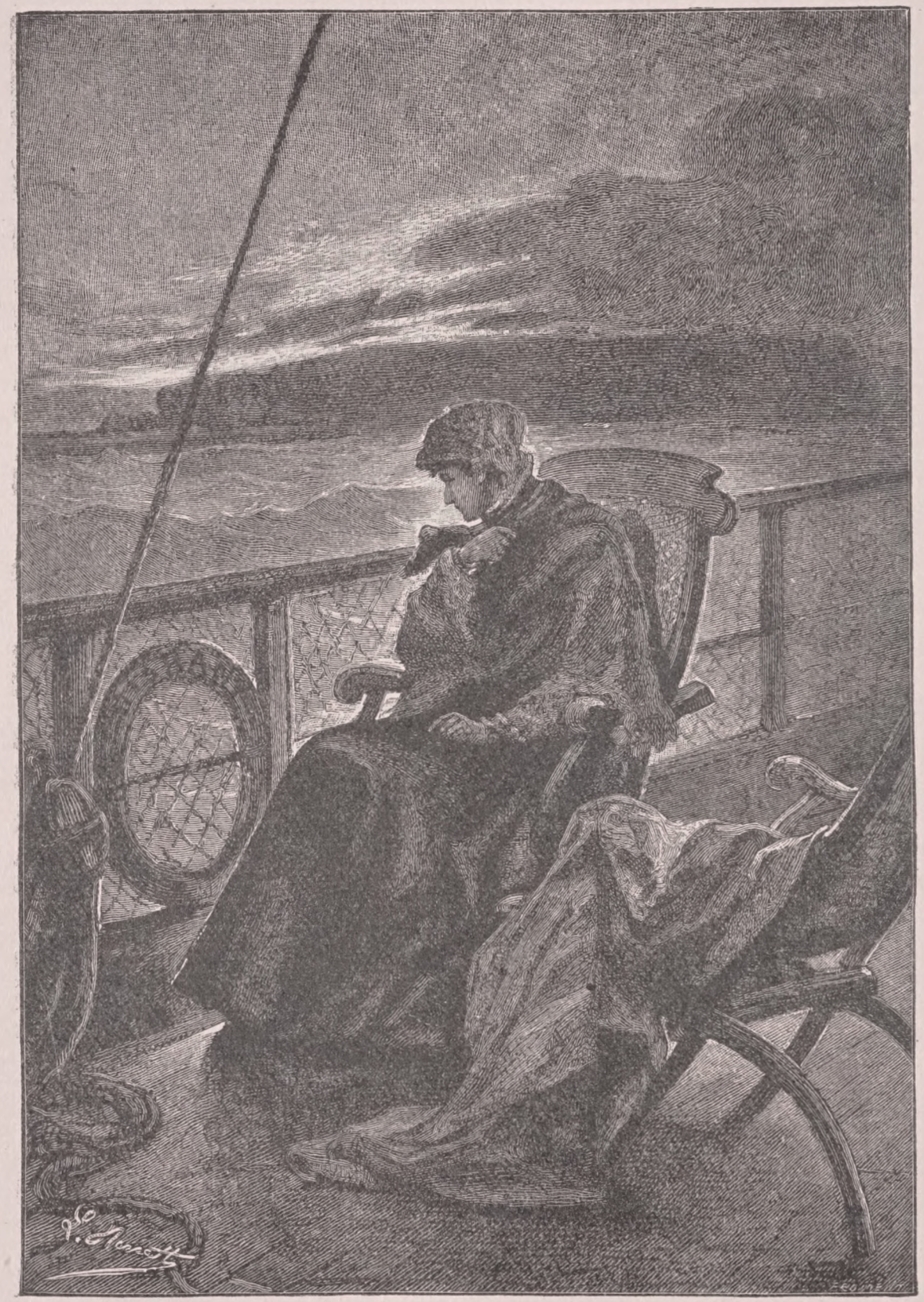
"I'd lay anything that lad has sailor's blood in his veins," observed Zach Fren. "You can see it by the look of him. He's got a pair of eyes you can read in, same as in a big-lettered book; and as to his voice—why, he talks as straight as an old captain and as soft as any girl."

"His voice!" murmured Dolly.

What illusion of her senses made her fancy that it was John's voice she had just heard; John's voice as it must have been ere he reached manhood.

There was something else—a something more significant still. Of course it was only an illusion; yet the features of this lad forcibly reminded her of John—John, her youthful husband, still in his twenties when the *Franklin* had carried him so far, and for so long, away from her.

"You see, Mrs. Branican," said Zach Fren, rubbing his big rough hands, "you are a favorite with everybody, Eng-



OFF PORT JACKSON (*p.* 191).

lishmen or Americans. Here in Australia you'll meet with the same good hearts as in America. You'll find it just the same in Adelaide as you did in San Diego. They all feel for you, the same as that young English lad does."

"That English lad? Is he really English?" Mrs. Branican went on asking herself under the sway of a deep emotion.

The trip was very pleasant during this first day out. The sea was quite calm, with a land breeze coming from the northwest; and it would doubtless continue just as smooth after the *Brisbane* had rounded Cape Howe, at the extremity of the Australian continent, on her way to Bass's Strait.

During the day Dolly hardly left the spar deck. The other passengers showed her every token of respect, and exhibited a great desire to keep her company. They wanted to see this woman, whose troubles were so well known, and who did not hesitate to brave so many dangers, to face so much fatigue, in the hope of saving her husband, if Providence willed that he was still alive. In her presence, indeed, no one would have cast a doubt on this last eventuality. How could they but share her confidence when she was heard to express such manly resolutions, and so distinctly stated everything she was about to undertake. Unconsciously they followed her in thought into the wilds of Central Australia. And in truth, more than one of them would have willingly accompanied her, otherwise than in their imagination. Now and again, though, while answering their questions, Dolly would stop short. Her face would assume a singular expression and would brighten up with a sudden glow. Zach Fren alone knew what was going on in her mind.

She had just caught sight of Godfrey. The walk of the young apprentice, his movements, the persistence with which he watched over her, that sort of instinct which

seemed to draw him toward her, all that took possession of her, and emotioned her to such an extent as to blend John and him together in her thoughts.

Dolly was unable to conceal from Zach Fren that she saw a striking resemblance between her husband and Godfrey. And it was not without a certain annoyance that the sailor saw her giving way to this impression, which was due, after all, to a mere fortuitous occurrence. He feared, and with good reason, that this resemblance reminded her too much of the child she had lost. It was truly alarming that the presence of this boy should overexcite her to such a degree.

However, Godfrey had not gone near her since, his duty not calling him aft, that part of the ship being exclusively reserved for first-class passengers. But from afar their eyes often met, and Dolly had been on the point of calling him. At a beck from her, Godfrey would have been but too glad to rush over. Dolly had not made the sign, and Godfrey had not come.

That evening, as Zach Fren was conducting Mrs. Branican to her cabin, she said:

"Zach, we must find out who this young apprentice is—to what family he belongs—his birthplace. Perhaps he is not of English origin."

"Perhaps not, ma'am," replied Zach. "He may be American. Anyway, if you'd like it, I'll go and ask the captain."

"No, Zach, no; I will question Godfrey myself."

And the boatswain heard Mrs. Branican saying to herself in an undertone:

"My child, my poor little Wat would be about his age, now!"

"Just what I was afraid of!" mused the sailor, as he made his way to his cabin.

The following day, August 22, the *Brisbane*, having

cleared Cape Howe during the night, continued her course under the same favorable conditions. The coast of Gippland, one of the chief provinces of Victoria, after winding to the southeast, sends out Wilson promontory, the furthermost offshoot of the continent to the south. This coast has fewer bays, harbors, inlets, and capes, known to geographers, than the straight coast line which stretches from Sydney to Cape Howe. As far as the eye can reach, it displays nothing more than vast plains, whose distant hilly boundaries cannot even be perceived from the sea.

Mrs. Branican, having left her cabin at daybreak, had resumed her seat abaft of the spar deck. Fren, who soon joined her, noticed a visible change in her manner. The land, which gradually stretched to the northwest, no longer monopolized her attention. Absorbed in her thoughts, she barely answered the sailor when he inquired what kind of a night she had had.

He did not press his inquiries. The main point with him was that Dolly might forget the singular likeness of Captain John and young Godfrey, and would not again speak of calling for the latter and questioning him. Indeed it was just possible that she had given up her intention of doing so, that her ideas were now bent on something else; and as a matter of fact she uttered not a word to him on the subject.

After breakfast she returned to her cabin and did not appear on deck again until three or four o'clock in the afternoon.

Just then the *Brisbane* was speeding at full steam toward Bass's Strait, which separates Australia from Van Diemen's Land.

It will hardly be contested, on the one hand, that the English have greatly benefited by the discovery of the Dutchman Janssen Tasman; or, on the other, that this island, a natural dependency of the continent, has gained considerably through the Anglo-Saxon administration.

Since 1642, the year in which it was discovered, this island, whose length is not short of 280 kilometers, whose soil is remarkably fertile, and whose forests contain immense resources, has progressed with gigantic strides.

From the beginning of this century, the English have administered it as they always administer. Without taking the slightest heed of the native races, they have divided the island into districts; they have founded important towns: Hobart Town, the capital, George Town, and a number of others; they have utilized the numerous indentations of the coast and created harbors where their vessels now land by hundreds. All this is as it should be. But what has become of the black population which originally inhabited the country?

To be sure, the poor creatures were hardly civilized; indeed they were looked upon as the very lowest type of the human species; they were ranked below the negroes of Africa, below the natives of Terra del Fuego.

But is the annihilation of an indigenous race really the acme of colonial progress? If it be, then indeed the English may claim to have achieved the most complete success. Should it be their intention to show a few Tasmanians at the next Universal Exhibition of Hobart Town, they have no time to lose: not one Tasmanian will be left by the end of the nineteenth century!

CHAPTER II.

GODFREY.

THE *Brisbane* crossed Bass's Strait during the night. In this latitude of the northern hemisphere, daylight scarcely lasts beyond five o'clock during the month of August. The moon, then in her first quarter, quickly dis-

appeared in the misty horizon, and the profound darkness concealed the outlines of the coast from view.

Currents and countercurrents struggle for the mastery in this narrow pass, opened to the waves of the Pacific; and our passengers were soon made aware of the choppy billows the steamer was plowing through by her heavy pitching.

The next day, the 23d of August, at dawn, she reached the mouth of Port Philip Bay. Once in the middle of this bay ships are sheltered from storms; but in order to get into it, they must proceed with caution and skill, especially when passing the long sandy point of Nepean on one side and Queenscliff point on the other. This bay is divided into several ports, in which vessels of considerable tonnage find excellent anchorage, Goelong, Sandridge, Williamstown—the two last forming the port of Melbourne. The aspect of the coast is sad, monotonous, and without attraction. Little verdure on the banks, the look of an almost dried up marsh, which, instead of lakes or ponds, shows nothing but indentations filled with hardened and fissured alluvium. It is for the future to modify the surface of these plains by doing away with the skeletons of trees now piteously vegetating here and there, and substituting for them such trees as the Australian climate will soon transform into splendid forests.

The *Brisbane* steamed up to one of the quays of Williamstown to land some of her passengers.

As there was to be a stay of thirty-six hours, Mrs. Branican resolved to spend them in Melbourne. Not that she had any business in that town, since it was only at Adelaide that she would begin her preparations for the expedition.

Why, then, did she go ashore? Did she apprehend being the object of too many and too frequent visits? Could she not avoid them by keeping to her cabin? Besides, by going to one of the hotels in the town, where her

presence would soon be known, would she not expose herself to more pressing and more numerous calls still?

Zach Fren could not account to himself for this move on Mrs. Branican's part. He had remarked it; she was not the same as she had been at Sydney. Her former communicative ways had almost changed to reticence. Could it be, as the boatswain had observed, that Godfrey's presence had brought back the remembrance of her child too forcibly to her mind? It was. Zach Fren was not mistaken. The sight of the young apprentice had made so deep an impression upon her that she felt the need of being alone. Had she given up the idea of questioning him? That might be, since she had not done so the day before, although she had at first expressed her intention to send for him. But, for the time being, if she insisted on landing at Melbourne, and spending ashore the twenty-four hours they would stay there, even at the risk of being the center of observation, it was with the idea of escaping—there is no other word for it—yes, of escaping from this fourteen-year-old lad, toward whom an instinctive force attracted her. Why, then, did she hesitate to speak to him; to inquire from him all she wanted to know of his nationality, his origin, his parents? Did she fear that his answer—and it was but too probable—would have the result of destroying forever her groundless illusions, that chimerical hope to which her imagination yielded so fondly and that her emotion had revealed to Zach Fren ?

Mrs. Branican and the boatswain went ashore quite early. On reaching the pier, she looked back.

Godfrey was leaning over the rail, on the fore deck of the *Brisbane*. On seeing her going away, his face became so sad, the half-suppressed wave of his hand was so expressive, it was so evident he would fain keep her aboard, that Dolly was well-nigh calling out, "I will come back soon, my child!"

She controlled herself, however, beckoned to Zach Fren to follow her, and made her way to the railroad which connects the port with the town.

For Melbourne is situated inland, on the left bank of the Yarra-Yarra River, about two kilometers from the coast—a few minutes' ride by train. There lies this city with its population of 300,000 inhabitants, the capital of the magnificent province of Victoria, which contains about a million souls, and on which, since 1851, it is no exaggeration to say that Mount Alexandra has lavished all the gold of its mines.

Although Mrs. Branican had stopped at one of the least frequented hotels in the town, she could not fail to arouse that curiosity—full of sympathy as it was—which her presence excited wherever she went. She therefore determined to go out and walk about the town with her attendant, even though her eyes saw but little of what they vacantly gazed upon.

On the whole, an American woman would have experienced no surprise, and felt but little pleasure, in visiting so modern a town. Although founded twelve years after San Francisco in California, Melbourne resembles it "on its worst side," if it may be thus expressed; wide streets, cutting each other at right angles; open squares void of grass or trees; hundreds of banks and offices in which enormous business is transacted; a district in which the retail trade is concentrated; public buildings, churches, temples, a university, a museum, a library, a hospital, a city hall, palatial schools; a monument erected to the two explorers Burke and Wills, who perished in an attempt to cross the Australian continent from south to north; then little traffic along the streets and avenues, outside the business quarter; a certain number of foreigners, more especially German Jews, who sell money just as others sell cattle or wool, and at a good price, so as to gladden the heart of Israel.

But merchants live in this commercial Melbourne as little as they can. It is in the suburbs of the town that they have built their residences, villas, cottages, and princely mansions, at Saint Kilda, Hawthorn, Emerald Hill, and Brighton, which (says one of the most interesting travelers who ever visited the country, M. D. Charney) gives Melbourne the advantage over San Francisco. And here the manifold trees of this climate are already luxuriating, the sumptuous parks are covered with shade, fresh water streams insure a delightful coolness for many a long month; in truth, there are few towns nestled in greater abundance of verdure.

Mrs. Branican paid but little heed to this splendor, even when Zach Fren led her out of the town into the open country. Nothing in her exterior showed that the beautiful situation of such or such a house, the magnificent surroundings of such another domain had attracted her attention. It always seemed as though, under the influence of one fixed idea, she was forever on the point of asking Zach some question which she dared not utter.

Both returned to the hotel toward evening. Dolly hardly tasted the supper she had ordered up to her room, whereupon she retired and spent the night in a half-sleep, haunted by visions of her husband and her child.

The following day she kept her room until two o'clock in the afternoon and wrote a long letter to Mr. Andrew, acquainting him with her departure from Sydney and her anticipated arrival in the South Australian capital. Needless to say that this letter breathed the writer's unshakable trust in the ultimate success of her search; but what aroused Mr. Andrew's surprise, nay his anxiety, on reading it, was to notice that while Dolly spoke of John as though she was sure of finding him alive, she now likewise talked of her child, of little Wat, as though he was not dead. And the

ALL WANTED TO SEE HER (*p.* 193).

good man began to ask himself if there was no new calamity to fear for the unfortunate woman's mind.

Nearly all the passengers bound for Adelaide had already returned from shore when Mrs. Branican and Zach came aboard. Godfrey was watching for her return, and as far as he saw her his face brightened with a smile. He ran up to the gangway and was there as if mounting guard when she set foot on it.

Zach Fren felt quite annoyed at this occurrence, and he knitted his heavy eyebrows. What would he not have given for the young apprentice to have left the steamer, or at least for him not to be there in Dolly's way, since his presence called back such sad recollections to her mind.

Mrs. Branican saw Godfrey. She stopped a moment; it seemed as though her glance sought the inmost recesses of his soul, but she did not speak to him; and, hanging down her head, she passed on and withdrew straightway to her cabin.

At three o'clock in the afternoon the *Brisbane* steamed out to the open and made for Adelaide.

The passengers who had embarked at Melbourne numbered about a hundred, most of them inhabitants of South Australia on their way to their native homes. There were also a few foreigners—among others a Chinese, about thirty or thirty-five years of age, as sleepy as a mole, yellow as a lemon, round as a pumpkin, and as fat as a three-button mandarin. He was not a mandarin, however. No! simply a servant in attendance on a personage whose physical appearance deserves to be described with special care.

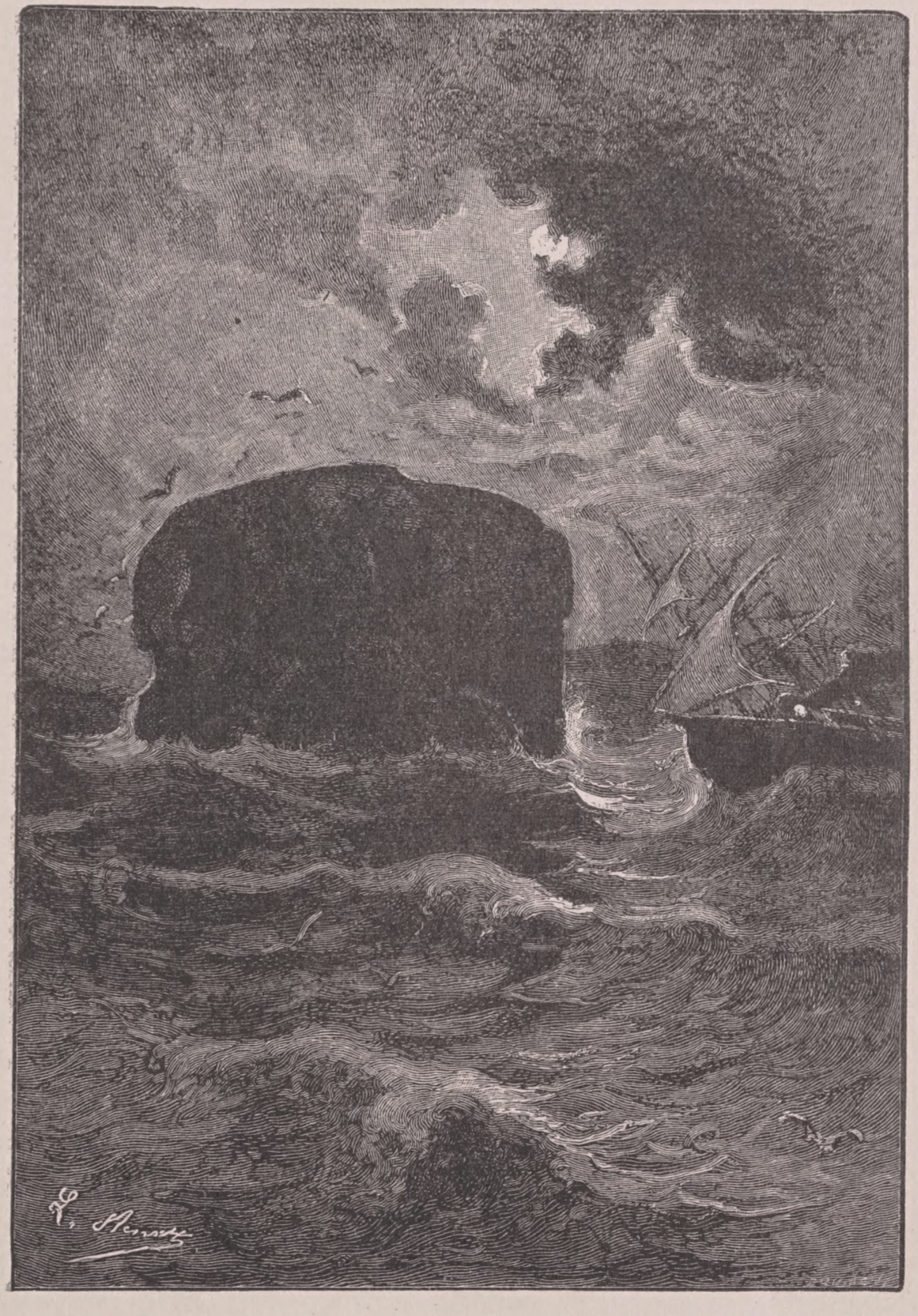
Imagine a son of Albion, as "British" as a human being can be; tall, thin, bony; a veritable specimen for a lecture on osteology—all neck, bust, and legs. This sample of an Anglo-Saxon, from forty-five to fifty years old, rose about six English feet above the level of the sea. A light beard,

none of which was shaved; hair of the same color, with silver threads among the gold; small ferret's eyes, an uncommonly long nose, rather pointed at the extremity and bearing a vague resemblance to the beak of a pelican or that of a stork; a skull on which the most superficial observer among phrenologists would easily have discovered the bumps of monomania and of obstinacy—all these combined to make up one of those heads that catch the eye and provoke a smile when they are drawn by a witty artist.

This Englishman wore, as in duty bound, the traditional tourist's costume—the double-peaked cap, the vest buttoned up to the chin, the many-pocketed coat, check pants, high gaiters with nickel buttons, nailed shoes, and a whitish dust-coat, which the wind draped close around him, thus showing off the leanness of his skeleton-like frame.

Who was this eccentric character? Nobody knew; for on Australian steamers the spirit of friendship does not go the length of permitting one passenger to pry into the business of another, inquiring what part he is bound for, where he comes from, etc. They are passengers on the same ship; as such they meet, and that is all. All the steward could have said was that this Englishman had registered under the name of Joshua Merritt,—for short, Jos Merritt,—of Liverpool (United Kingdom), accompanied by his servant Gin-Ghi, of Hong Kong (Celestial Empire).

Once he had got on board, Jos Merritt went and sat on one of the seats on the spar deck, and did not leave it until lunch time, when the four o'clock bell rang. He returned to the said seat at half-past four and did not quit it till dinner time at seven o'clock, after which he was at his place again at eight, and there he remained in the attitude of an unwound automaton, his two hands spread open on his knees, never turning his head to the right or to the left, his eyes riveted on the coast, which was disappearing behind the evening mist. Then at ten o'clock he stepped



WITH FULL STEAM ON (*p.* 195).

to his cabin with a geometrical stride, the rhythm of which even the rolling of the boat could not disturb.

During part of the night Mrs. Branican, who had gone on deck a little before nine, walked about the aft part of the *Brisbane*, although the temperature was rather cool. With her mind beset with anxious thinking, fascinated—to use a more exact expression—by the glamour of its own fancies, she would not have been able to sleep. She was too closely confined in her cabin; she longed to breathe that fresh air, laden at times with the keen scent of the "acacia flagrans," which can be detected fifty miles out at sea, off the coast of Australia. Did she think of meeting the young apprentice, of speaking with him, of questioning him, of asking him—asking him what? Godfrey had finished his quarter-deck duty at ten o'clock and would not be up again till two in the morning; and now Dolly, truly worn down by her moral excitement, felt she should return to her couch.

Toward the middle of the night the *Brisbane* rounded Cape Otway, at the extremity of the district of Polwarth. From this point forward she would sail due northwest up to Discovery Bay, at the apex of the conventional line drawn along the 141st meridian as the division line between Victoria and New South Wales on the one hand, and the territories of Southern Australia on the other.

At early morning Jos Merritt could be seen at his seat on the spar deck, in the same spot, in the same attitude, just as though he had not left it the night before. As to the Chinaman, Gin-Ghi, he slept the sleep of twenty just men in some corner.

Zach Fren must have been somewhat accustomed to human hobbies and peculiarities, for cranks are not wanting in the forty-two States grouped under the formula U. S. A. Still, he could not look at this piece of human machinery without a certain amazement.

And what was his surprise when, passing close to this long and motionless gentleman, he heard himself addressed in these terms in a rather shrill voice:

"Boatswain Zach Fren, I believe?"

"That's me, sir," replied Zach.

"Mrs. Branican's companion?"

"Quite right, sir. I see you know——"

"I do know—in search of her husband—lost fourteen years ago. That's right! That's quite right."

"What do you say, 'quite right'?"

"Oh, yes—Mrs. Branican—quite right—I am in search, too, of——"

"Your wife?"

"Oh, no! I'm not married. Not I! And if I had lost my wife I would not look for her; not I."

"Then it is——"

"In search of a hat."

"Your hat? You've lost your hat, have you, sir?"

"My hat? No! It is the hat—well, that's my business. You will give my respects to Mrs. Branican. That's right! That's quite right!"

Jos Merritt's lips closed and not another syllable was uttered.

"An escaped lunatic!" muttered Zach Fren to himself. And he thought it beneath him to take any more notice of the gentleman.

When Dolly reappeared on deck the boatswain joined her, and both of them sat down almost opposite the Englishman. The latter did not stir any more than the god Terminus. Having instructed Zach Fren to present his respects to Mrs. Branican, he no doubt thought he had no more to do in the matter.

In any case Dolly did not notice the presence of this extraordinary passenger. She had a long talk with her companion about the preparations for the land journey to

"THAT'S ME, SIR" (*p.* 204).

be commenced on their arrival in Adelaide. Not a day, not an hour was to be lost. It was important that they should reach, nay, if possible, go beyond the central portion of the continent before it was dried up by the excessive heat of the torrid zone. Of all dangers inherent to such a journey, the most terrible would probably be caused by the rigors of the climate, and every precaution should be taken to guard against them. Dolly spoke of Captain John, of his robust temperament, of his indomitable energy, which had enabled him—she had no doubt of it—to withstand the hardships to which others less vigorous, less hardened, had fallen victims. All this time she had made no allusion to Godfrey, and Zach Fren began to think he had left her mind, when she presently remarked:

"I have not seen the young apprentice yet to-day, Zach. Did you see him anywhere?"

"No, ma'am," replied the boatswain, apparently annoyed at the question.

"Perhaps I could do something for the child," she continued, assuming an almost indifferent air, which, however, failed to delude the sailor.

"That lad?" he asked. "Oh! he's got a good trade. He'll be all right! Why, I can see him quartermaster in a few years, if he behaves himself and has a little go in him."

"No matter," said Dolly, "I feel interested in him; interested to such a degree! The fact is, Zach, that resemblance, that extraordinary resemblance, between my poor John and him; and, again, Wat, my lost child, would be his age now!"

And as she spoke the poor bereaved wife and mother grew pale; her voice faltered; the gaze she turned on Zach was so searching that the boatswain lowered his eyes.

Then she added:

"You must bring him to me this afternoon, Zach. Do

not forget. I must speak to him. This voyage will be over to-morrow. Never more perhaps shall we meet again; and before leaving the *Brisbane*, I want to know. Yes! I must know.''

Zach promised to fetch Godfrey to her, and then she left him.

The boatswain was now thoroughly alarmed, and kept on pacing the deck until the steward rang the dinner-bell. He then almost knocked against the Englishman, who was marking time with each ring of the bell, as he stalked toward the companion ladder.

''Right! That's right!'' said he as he passed. ''Fren, you have at my request given my respects. Her husband lost. That's quite right!''

And he marched on, not to lose the seat he had chosen as his own at the dining table—the best, of course, next to the kitchen, which enabled him to help himself first and take the choicest bits.

At three o'clock the *Brisbane* cleared Portland, the principal port of the Normandy district, where the Melbourne railway ends; then, after rounding Cape Nelson, she steamed past Discovery Bay, and then directed her course almost due north, keeping pretty close to the coast.

It was then Zach Fren told Godfrey that Mrs. Branican wished to speak to him.

''Speak to me?'' exclaimed the young lad.

And his heart beat so fast that he instinctively caught hold of the rail to steady himself.

The next moment, preceded by the boatswain, he made his way to the cabin where Mrs. Branican was awaiting him.

She looked at him for some time in silence as he stood before her, cap in hand. She was seated on a couch. Zach Fren, posted near the door, was anxiously watching both of them. Well he knew what Dolly was about to ask,

but he could not guess what the young apprentice would have to say in reply.

"My boy," said Mrs. Branican, "I would like to know a few things about you—about the family you belong to. If I ask you these questions it is because I feel interested in you. Would you mind answering me?"

"Mind? Of course not, ma'am!" replied Godfrey, trembling with emotion.

"How old are you?" asked Dolly.

"I don't know exactly, ma'am, but I guess I am fourteen or fifteen."

"Yes, fourteen or fifteen years old! And when did you begin your seafaring life?"

"I came to sea when I was about eight, as cabin-boy, and I have been an apprentice two years now."

"Have you been on any long voyages?"

"Yes, ma'am, on the Pacific Ocean, as far as Asia; and on the Atlantic as far as Europe."

"You are not English, then?"

"No, I am not; I'm an American."

"And yet you are serving on an English vessel?"

"The ship I first served on was sold at Sydney not long ago. So, finding myself adrift, as it were, I joined the *Brisbane* till I'd have an opportunity to get on an American vessel again."

"That's right, my lad," said Dolly, beckoning him to come closer to her.

Godfrey obeyed.

"Now," she added, "I want to know where you were born?"

"At San Diego."

"Quite so, at San Diego," repeated Dolly, without appearing surprised, and as though she had anticipated the answer.

As to Zach Fren, what he had just heard stirred every fiber of his good old heart.

"Yes, ma'am; at San Diego," continued Godfrey. "Oh! I know you well! I just guess I ought to. When I heard that you were coming to Sydney, I was so pleased! If you only knew, ma'am, how I feel about everything that concerns Captain John Branican!"

Dolly took the young apprentice's hand and held it for a few moments without saying a word. Then, in a voice no longer able to conceal the full drift of her thoughts:

"What is your name?" she asked.

"Godfrey."

"Godfrey is your first name. But what is your surname?"

"I have no other!"

"Where are your father and mother?"

"I have none, ma'am."

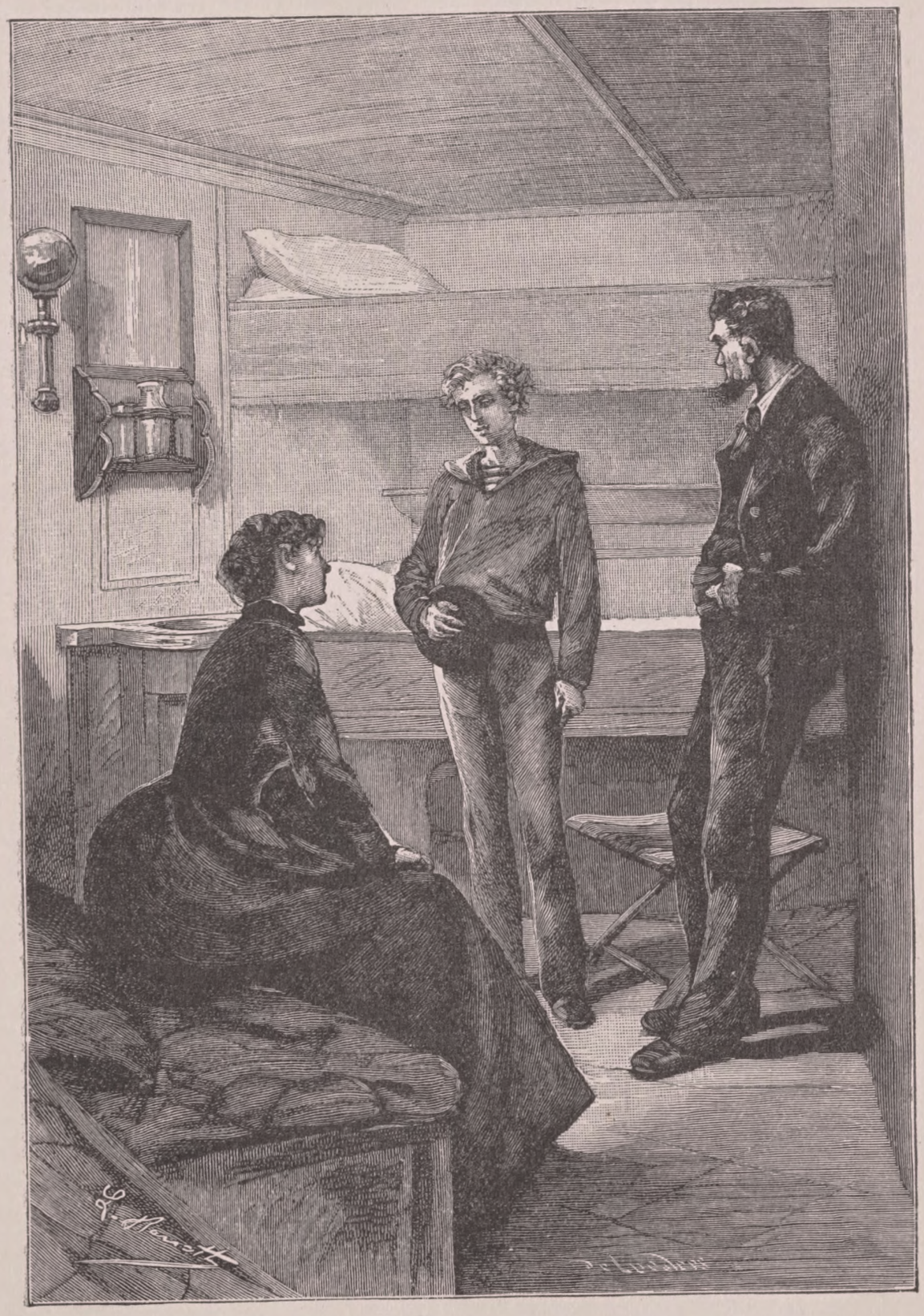
"No parents!" said Mrs. Branican. "Where were you brought up, then?"

"At Wat House," replied Godfrey; "and thanks to your kindness, ma'am. I often saw you when you came to see your orphan children! Of course you did not notice me among all the little ones, but I always saw you; and how often I would have liked to run over and kiss your hand. Then, when I was eight years old, as I was fond of the sea, I went off as cabin-boy—and there is a lot of others, too, Wat House orphan boys, that went to sea; and not one of us will ever forget what we owe you, Mrs. Branican, our mother!"

"Your mother!" cried Dolly, who trembled as though that name had found an echo in her inmost soul.

She had drawn Godfrey to her and covered him with kisses. The poor lad cried heartily; and, away in his corner, Zach Fren, really frightened at the sentiments he saw taking deeper root every instant in Dolly's heart, murmured to himself:

"Poor woman—poor woman! Where is she wandering to!"



HE STOOD BEFORE HER, CAP IN HAND (*p.* 206).

Mrs. Branican now arose and said:

"You may go now, Godfrey. Go, my child! I will see you again—I need to be alone just now."

And with one long last look, the young lad turned slowly away.

Zach prepared to follow him, when Dolly desired him to stay.

"Zach," she began, in broken words, "Zach, this child was brought up with the orphans at Wat House. He was born in San Diego. He is fourteen or fifteen years old. He resembles John, feature for feature. He has his frank, open face and his bold bearing. He loves the sea as John does. He is a sailor's son. He is John's son. He is my own! They thought that the waves in San Diego Bay had carried off the poor little mite. But he was not dead; he was rescued, and those who saved him from death did not know who his mother was. His mother, it was I—I, then an insane woman! This lad is not Godfrey, as he calls himself! He is Wat. He is my son! God has given him back to me before he restores me his father, too."

Zach Fren listened to Mrs. Branican without interrupting her. He well understood that the unhappy woman could not argue otherwise; all appearances were in her favor. She followed up her one idea with a mother's irrefutable logic; and still the worthy sailor felt his heart sink within him, for all this was an illusion, and it was his duty to crush all her reasoning at one blow. He dared not let her go farther on that downward path which would surely lead her to a new abyss.

The truth should be told her; and it burst from his lips:

"Mrs. Branican," said he, "you are making a mistake. I can't let you believe what I know is not true; and I won't, either. That likeness that you think so much about is all chance! Your little Wat is not in this world. He

was drowned on that terrible day, and young Godfrey is not your son."

"Wat drowned!" exclaimed Mrs. Branican. "And how do you know? Who can prove it?"

"I can, ma'am."

"You can?"

"Yes, ma'am. About a week after that calamity, the body of a child was washed ashore at Loma Point. I found it and I told Mr. Andrew about it. He recognized little Wat, and had him buried in the cemetery at San Diego, where he and I often brought flowers afterward to his little grave."

"My poor little darling—over there—in the cemetery! And I was never told about it!"

"Why, of course you weren't, ma'am," replied Fren. "You could not be talked to just then; and when you recovered from your illness four years later, there was danger, you see. Mr. Andrew was afraid-like to heap up your misfortunes; and so he kept quiet! But your baby is drowned, Mrs. Branican, and Godfrey cannot be your boy!"

Dolly fell back on the couch. Her eyes had closed. It seemed to her as if all around her was darkness where all was sunshine but an instant before.

At a wave of her hand Zach Fren left her alone, buried in her sorrows.

The next day, the 26th of August, she was still in her cabin when the *Brisbane*, after passing Backstairs, between Kangaroo Island and Jervis Head, entered the Gulf of St. Vincent and anchored in the port of Adelaide.

CHAPTER III.

A HISTORICAL HAT.

OF the three Australian capitals, Sydney is the oldest, Melbourne is the next, and Adelaide the youngest. But truly, if the last is the youngest of the three, it is undoubtedly the prettiest. It was founded in 1853, and the political existence of South Australia only dates from 1837, while its independence was officially recognized only in 1856. Indeed it is not improbable that the youthfulness of Adelaide will continue indefinitely under an unrivaled climate, the healthiest of the whole continent, in the middle of territories that are quite unacquainted with consumption, fevers, or any kind of contagious diseases. Now and again there is a death there, however; but, as M. D. Charnay wittily observes, "that, after all, might be an exception."

The soil of South Australia differs from that of the neighboring province in containing no auriferous mines, but it is rich in copper ore. The mines of Capunda, Burra-Burra, Wallaroo, and Munta, discovered fifty years ago, attracted immigrants by thousands, and built up the wealth of the province.

Adelaide does not lie on the coast of Saint Vincent. Like Melbourne, it is situated about a dozen miles inland, and a railroad connects it with the port. Its botanical garden can compete with that of its sister. Founded by Schumburg, it contains hot-houses unequaled in the world, beds of roses which are veritable parks, and enjoys the shade of the most magnificent trees of the temperate zone, mingled with those of the semi-tropical.

Neither Sydney nor Melbourne could be placed in comparison with Adelaide for its elegance. Its streets are wide, pleasantly situated, and carefully kept. Some of them possess a veritable border of monuments, such as King

William Street. The general post-office and the townhall deserve particular attention from an architectural point of view. In the commercial part of the town, the noisy streets named after Hindley and Glenell are alive with the bustle of commerce. There you see numbers of merchants, who wear that peculiar look of satisfaction arising from easy, numerous, and safe transactions, and free from the anxious cares generally created by business.

Mrs. Branican stopped at a hotel in King William Street, whither Zach Fren accompanied her. The mother had just undergone a trying ordeal by the annihilation of her last illusions. The appearances seemed to point so unmistakably to Godfrey as her son that she had at once given herself up to the idea. And now, this new disappointment could be read on her face, which was paler than usual, and in the depths of her tear-stained eyes. But from the moment she had ascertained that her hopes were irrevocably lost, she had expressed no further wish to see the young apprentice; she had no longer spoken of him. There only remained in her memory that striking resemblance, which reminded her so much of John.

Now Dolly without delay set about the preparations for the expedition. She would appeal to every source of help, every kind of sympathy. If necessary she would spend her whole fortune in this new attempt; she would stimulate with all the pecuniary means at her command the zeal of those who would join her in this last supreme effort.

Helpers would not be wanting her. This South Australian province is *par excellence* the country of daring explorers. From this province came the most celebrated pioneers, who dived into the unknown regions of the center. From this province have sprung the Warburtons, the John Forrests, the Giles, the Sturts, and the Lindsays, whose itineraries cross each other on the maps of this vast continent—itineraries that Mrs. Branican was about cut-

ting obliquely with her own. Thus, in 1874, Colonel Warburton crossed the breadth of Australia on the twentieth degree east to northwest as far as Nichol Bay; John Forrest, during the same year, went in the opposite direction from Perth to Port Augusta; Giles, in 1876, started also from Perth to reach Spencer Gulf on the twenty-fifth degree.

It had been agreed that the diverse elements of the expedition, both the material and the men, should be brought together, not at Adelaide, but at the terminus of the railroad which runs northward as far as Lake Eyre. To travel these five degrees by rail would be a saving of time and fatigue. In the mountainous districts of Flinders Ranges, they would be able to gather together the necessary number of wagons and cattle, the saddle horses for the escort, the oxen to draw the provisions, and the camping equipment. The interminable plains, the immense sandy steppes they would traverse, were destitute of vegetation, almost without water. And there was provision to make for the wants of a caravan which would not contain less than forty people, including the attendants and likewise the body of men who would watch after the safety of the travelers.

As to the engaging of these people, Dolly should see to it before leaving Adelaide, and in this she was throughout effectively aided by the governor of South Australia, who placed himself at her disposal. Thanks to him, thirty men, well mounted and well armed, some of native birth, others Europeans, accepted Mrs. Branican's offer. She assured them a very high salary for the time they would be away over and above a premium of a hundred pounds each at the close of the expedition, whatever should be the result. They were to be under the command of a retired country police officer, Tom Marix, a robust and resolute man about forty years of age, whom the governor could trust. Tom Marix had carefully picked out his men from among the strongest and most reliable of the many who had offered

their services. On an escort enrolled on such conditions every reliance could be placed.

The attendants would be under Zach Fren's orders, and it would be no fault of his if "men and beasts did not skim along with all sails set" as he used to say.

In reality, above Tom Marix and Zach Fren, the true leader, the incontestable head, was Mrs. Branican—the soul of the expedition.

With the assistance of Mr. Andrew's agents, a considerable credit had been opened for her at the Adelaide Bank, from which she could draw wherewith to meet all her wants.

All this being settled, it was agreed that Zach Fren should start for Farina Town station by the 30th at latest, and that Mrs. Branican and her followers would join him as soon as her presence would no longer be required in Adelaide.

"Zach," said she to him, "see that our caravan be ready to start by the first week in September. Pay everything cash, whatever the expenditure may be. The provisions will be forwarded to you from this by rail, and you will get them packed on the wagons at Farina Town. Nothing must be neglected to insure success."

"Everything will be ready, ma'am," replied the boatswain. "When you come, yourself, all that will be needed will be the boatswain's whistle!"

It may well be imagined that Zach Fren had enough to do in the last few days that he spent in Adelaide. As the Yankees say, he "hustled" himself so hard that by the 29th of August he was able to take his ticket for Farina Town. Twelve hours later, when the train deposited him at the terminus, he informed Mrs. Branican by wire that a portion of the baggage for the expedition had safely arrived!

On her part, with Tom Marix's help, Dolly fulfilled her share of the task so far as the escort, its equipment, and clothing were concerned. It was of importance that the

horses should be selected with care; and the Australian breed offers excellent specimens, inured to fatigue, proof against the heat, and remarkably small "feeders." There would be no trouble with them through the forests and along the plains, as grass and water would be found in plenty. But further on, across the sandy deserts, camels would have to be taken in their place; which exchange would be made at Alice Spring station. It was from that time forward that Mrs. Branican and her companions would have to battle with the material obstacles which render an exploration in the regions of Central Australia so dangerous.

The labor that this energetic woman imposed upon herself had somewhat diverted her thoughts from the closing incidents of her trip on board the *Brisbane*. This display of activity, which left her not a moment's respite, had dazed her thinking powers. Of that illusion to which her imagination had abandoned itself for a moment, of that ephemeral hope that Zach Fren's outspoken statement had crushed with a single word, she retained nothing but a vague memory. Now she knew that her little child lay yonder in a corner of the cemetery at San Diego, and that she could go and weep over his tomb. And yet the resemblance of the young apprentice, and the likeness of John and Godfrey, still haunted her.

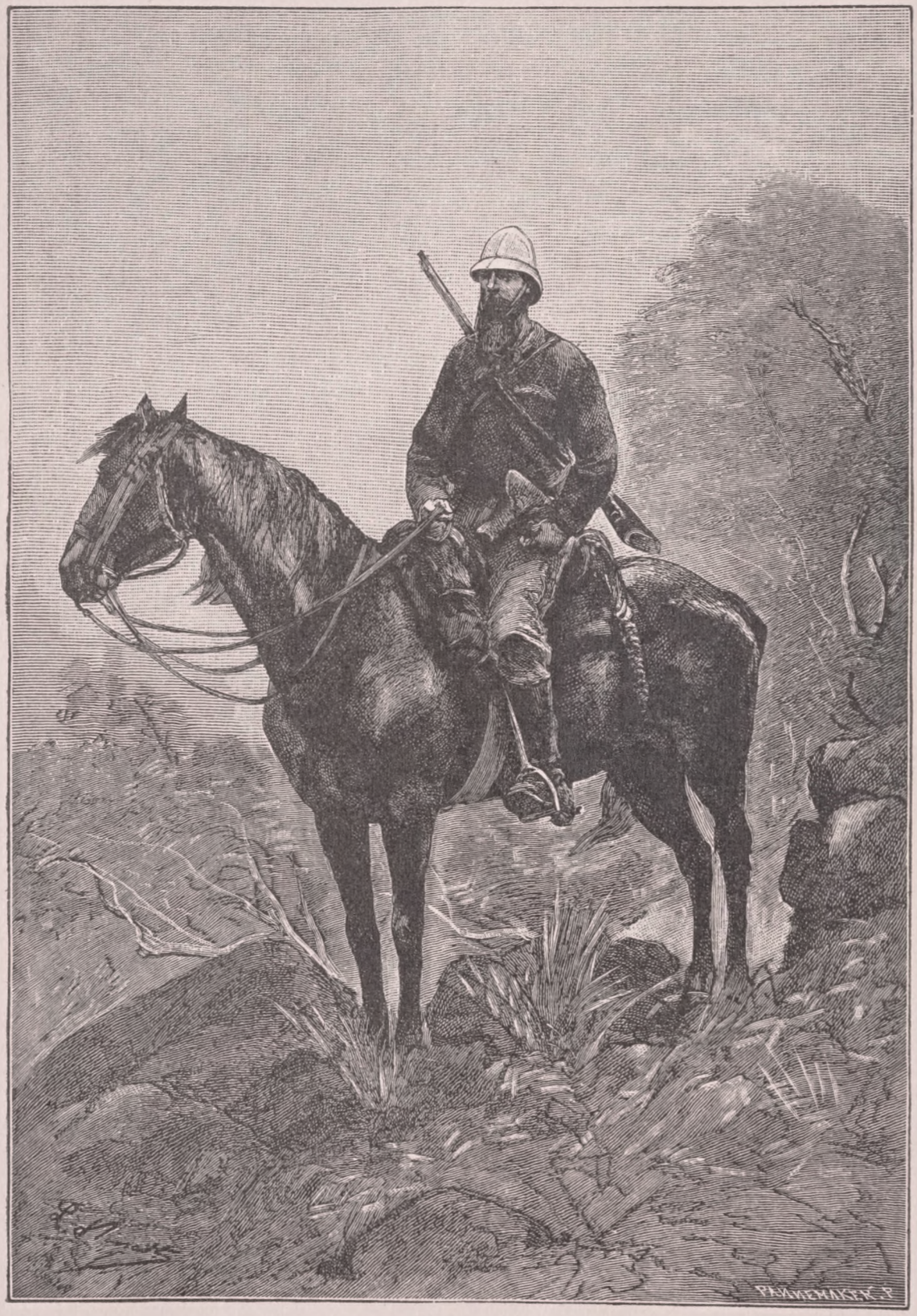
Since the arrival of the steamer, Mrs. Branican had not seen the young boy. Whether he had tried to meet her during the few days following her landing, she did not know. In any case, it seemed Godfrey had not put in an appearance at the hotel in King William Street. And why would he have done so? After his last interview with her, Dolly had kept her cabin and had not sent for him again. And besides, Dolly knew that the *Brisbane* had gone back to Melbourne, and when the steamer would return to Adelaide she would no longer be there.

While she was thus making her preparations, another per-

sonage was quite as busy getting ready for an analogous expedition. He had alighted at a hotel on Hindley Street. An apartment on the front and a room at the back, united under the same roof those singular representatives of the Aryan and of the yellow race, the Englishman Jos Merritt and the Chinaman Gin-Ghi.

Where had these two types, one from furthermost Asia, the other from furthermost Europe, come from? Where were they going? What had they been doing in Melbourne, and what were they going to do in Adelaide? How had this couple, master and man, come together,—the former paying the latter, the latter waiting on the former,—to travel the world over together? All this will be known after listening to a conversation held between Jos Merritt and Gin-Ghi, on the evening of September 5.

And, first of all, if certain characteristic features, certain hobbies, the drollness of his attitudes and his peculiar way of expressing himself, have given the reader an idea of this Anglo-Saxon, it behooves us to give likewise an outline of his Chinese servant, who had preserved the dress peculiar to his nationality—the "han chaul" or under vest, the tunic or "ma coual," the robe "haol," buttoned along the side, and the wide pants with the cloth belt. He was called Gin-Ghi, and well deserved the name, which in reality means "lazy man." For lazy he was to a remarkable degree in the presence of work as well as in the face of danger. He would not have walked ten steps to carry out an order, he would not have gone twenty to place himself out of danger's way. Evidently Jos Merritt must have been endowed with an enormous amount of patience to keep such a servant. After all, it may have become a matter of habit, for they had been traveling together for the last five or six years. They had come across each other at San Francisco, where Chinese abound, and Gin-Ghi had been engaged by the Englishman "on trial," as it was stipulated—a trial which



TOM MARIX (*p.* 213).

was likely to last until their final separation on this planet. It may be worth adding that the servant, although brought up in Hong-Kong, spoke his employer's language as if he were a native of Manchester.

Jos Merritt indeed was of too phlegmatic a temperament to ever get into a passion. Although he might threaten Gin-Ghi with the most frightful tortures in use in the Celestial Empire,—where the Minister of Justice is literally styled the Minister of Tortures,—he would never have raised his finger at him. When his orders were not attended to, he attended to them himself. This simplified matters. Perhaps the day was not far off when he would go to the length of waiting on his waiter. Very probably the Chinaman was inclined to think so; and in his mind this change would be but equitable. True, while waiting for the advent of this happy state of things, Gin-Ghi was obliged to follow his master wherever this eccentric man's whims brought him. On that point Jos Meritt was inflexible. He would have carried Gin-Ghi's trunk on his own shoulders rather than leave him behind when the train or the steamer was about to start. Willy-nilly, the "lazy man" should follow him, even though he should compensate himself afterward by sleeping throughout the whole journey in the most perfect *dolce far niente*.

Thus it was that one had accompanied the other over thousands of miles on the old and on the new continent, and it is in consequence of this system of continued locomotion that the pair were at this moment in the South Australian capital.

"That's right! That's quite right!" said Jos Merritt that evening. "All our arrangements are complete, I believe?"

And it were hard to tell why this was addressed to Gin-Ghi in the shape of a question, seeing that the speaker had been obliged to see to everything himself. But he never failed to do so—on principle.

"Ten thousand times completed," replied the Chinaman, who had never succeeded in getting rid of the phraseology in vogue among the inhabitants of the Celestial Empire.

"Our trunks?"

"Are fastened."

"Our arms?"

"In excellent condition."

"Our cases of provisions?"

"Why, you yourself, Master Jos, got them put in the baggage-room at the station. And, besides, what is the use of bringing provisions when we are sure to be eaten ourselves one day or another!"

"To be eaten, Gin-Ghi? That's right! That's quite right! So you quite expect to be eaten, do you?"

"That will happen sooner or later; and, six months ago, we came very near ending our travels in the inside of a cannibal. *I* had a narrow escape, I know!"

"You, Gin-Ghi?"

"Of course, for the very good reason that I am fat and plump, whereas you are lean, Master Jos, and those people will always give me the preference!"

"The preference! That's right! That's quite right!"

"Then again, have not the Australian natives a particular liking for the yellow flesh of the Chinese, which is all the more tender as they live on rice and vegetables?"

"That is why I am always telling you to smoke, Gin-Ghi," quietly answered Jos Merritt. "You know that man-eaters dislike the flesh of smokers."

And the cautious Chinaman did smoke incessantly, not opium, but the tobacco that Jos Merritt supplied him with liberally. The Australians, it seems, as well as their brother cannibals in other countries, have an unconquerable repugnance for human flesh when it is impregnated with nicotine. That is why Gin-Ghi worked so conscientiously at rendering himself unfit to be devoured.

And was it really true that his master and himself had already exposed themselves to figure at a cannibal banquet, in a different capacity from that of guests? It was. Somewhere along the coast of Africa, Jos and his companion had been well-nigh ending their adventurous life in this manner. Ten months previously, in Queensland, to the west of Rockhampton and of Gracemere, some few hundred miles from Brisbane, their pilgrimages had led them among the most savage tribes of the aborigines. There, cannibalism may be said to exist in the endemic state. And, on this occasion also, Jos Meritt and Gin-Ghi, having fallen into the hands of the blacks, would certainly have perished, but for the intervention of the police. Rescued just in time, they had been able to make their way to the capital of Queensland, then to Sydney, and from this town the steamer had now brought them to Adelaide. Nor had his past experience cured the Englishman of his mania for exposing himself and his servant; for, judging from Gin-Ghi's remarks, they were even now proceeding to Central Australia.

"And all that for a hat!" cried the Chinaman. "*Ay ya! Ay ya!* When I think of it, my tears dribble like raindrops on yellow chrysanthemums!"

"How soon will you have quite finished your 'dribbling,' Gin-Ghi?" asked Jos Meritt with a frown.

"Why, if ever you do find that hat, Master Jos, it will be nothing more than a rag!"

"That's enough, Gin-Ghi! Indeed, it's too much! I forbid you to thus express yourself on that hat or on any other! You hear me? Now if you do so again, you shall have forty or fifty strokes of the rattan on the soles of your feet!"

"We are not in China," objected Gin-Ghi.

"I will deprive you of food."

"That will make me thinner."

"I will cut off your cue quite close to your head!"

"Cut my cue!"

"I will cut off your rations of tobacco!"

"God Fo protect me!"

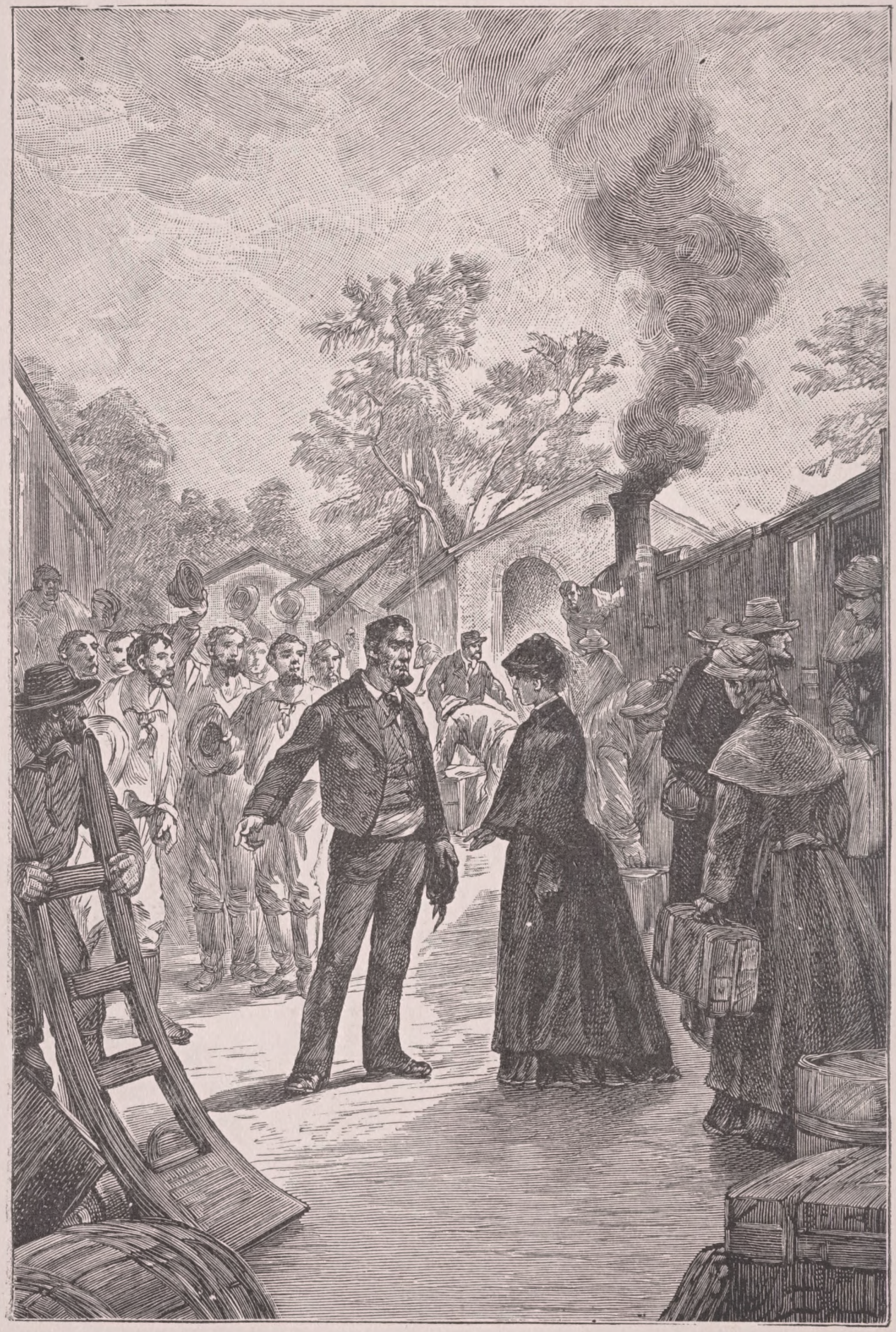
"He will not protect you."

And in the face of so terrible a threat, Gin-Ghi resumed his submissive and respectful mien.

Now what hat was this? And why did Jos Merritt spend his life in searching for a hat?

This eccentric Liverpudlian was one of those inoffensive maniacs who do not belong exclusively to the United Kingdom. They are to be found on the banks of the Loire, the Elbe, the Danube, or the Escaut as well as in the countries watered by the Thames, the Clyde, and the Tweed. Jos Merritt was very rich and very well known in Lancashire and the surrounding counties as an enthusiastic "collector." It was not pictures, books, objects of art, or even knickknacks that he collected with great trouble and at much expense. No! It was hats—a museum of historical headgears and coiffures of any sort worn by man, woman, or child.

On his own statement, he possessed some very precious historical curiosities: the helmet worn by Patrocles when he was slain by Hector at the siege of Troy; the cap used by Themistocles at the battle of Salamis; the insignia of Galen and Hippocrates; Cæsar's galea, which a blast of wind had carried off just as he crossed the Rubicon; Lucretia Borgia's headdress for each of her weddings, with Sforza, Alphonso d'Este and Alphonso d'Aragon respectively; Tamerlin's favorite turban in his march through Sindh; that of Genghis Khan when he destroyed Bokhara and Samarcand; Elizabeth's coiffure at her coronation; that of Mary Stuart when she escaped from the castle of Lochleven; that of Catherine II. when she was crowned at Moscow; the cap worn by Peter the Great when he worked



ZACH FREN AND HIS MEN WERE AT THE DEPOT (*p.* 228).

in the ship-building yards at Saardam; Marlborough's soft hat, used by him at the battle of Ramilies; the headgear of King Olaus of Denmark, who was killed at Sticklestad; Gessler's hat which William Tell would not salute; the peaked hat that Napoleon I. wore at Wagram; and a hundred others no less curious.

His greatest regret was that he did not possess the particular covering which Noah happened to have on his head when the ark stood still on the top of Mt. Ararat, or that which encircled Abraham's noble brow just as he was on the point of sacrificing Isaac.

However, he was not without hope of finding them some day. As to the headwear adopted by Adam and Eve when they were driven forth from the earthly paradise, he had given up all thought of discovering them, trustworthy historians having laid it down as a fact that the first man and the first woman were in the habit of going bareheaded.

The childish avocations of Jos Merritt's life may be understood from this very abbreviated catalogue of his museum of curiosities.

He was a thorough believer; he entertained no doubt regarding the authenticity of his finds; and no one will ever know the labor he went through, traveling the length and breadth of a country, searching towns and villages, ransacking stores and bric-a-brac bazaars, squandering money and time, and finding in the end some worthless rag which was sold to him for its weight in gold. He had begun to search the universe at large for some mysterious, undiscoverable object; and now that he had exhausted the available resources of Europe, Africa, Asia, America, and Oceanica, either by himself, or his correspondents, agents, or travelers, he was preparing to penetrate into the most inaccessible regions of the Australian continent.

And there was a reason for his so doing—a reason which others might have deemed insufficient perhaps, but which

he looked upon as of the greatest moment. Having been informed that the Australian natives were fond of adorning themselves with the hats of civilized nations,—and the state of those hats may be imagined!—and knowing, on the other hand, that whole cargoes of those rags were regularly sent to the various ports along the coast, he had come to the conclusion that he might perchance "make a good haul" in those parts.

And, as luck would have it, Merritt was just then haunted by an idea, an idea likely to deprive him entirely of the little sense he still had. He should needs find a hat, one particular hat, which, so he said, was to be the gem of his collection.

What was this phœnix of a hat? What manufacturer, ancient or modern, had brought it into existence? On what head, royal, noble, or plebeian, had it been displayed; and on what occasion? These were secrets that Jos Merritt would have intrusted to no man in the world.

Thanks to a concatenation of precious data, he had acquired the conviction that the said hat, after quite a series of vicissitudes, was now terminating its checkered career on the head of some Australian chieftain. If he came to find it out, he would give anything for it; he would steal it, if its owner declined to sell it! It was to be the trophy of all his peregrinations! And it was for the sake of this hat that Gin-Ghi was once more about running the danger of ending his life between the jaws of cannibals, and these cannibals were far more voracious than any he had encountered yet. Forsooth, it must be acknowledged, the servant was so much attached to his master, by interest as well as by affection, that he could not have parted with him.

"To-morrow morning," said Jos Merritt, "we take the express."

"At the second watch?" asked Gin-Ghi.

"At the second watch, if you please to call it so; and see that everything is ready."

"I will do my best, master; but pray remember I have not the ten thousand hands of Goddess Couan-in."

"I am not acquainted with the number of hands of Goddess Couan-in, but I do know you have two, and I will trouble you to use them to the best of my interests."

"Until the cannibals make a meal on them!"

"That's right! That's quite right!"

It were idle to say that Gin-Ghi made no greater use of his hands on this occasion than on previous ones, and that he relied on his master to do his work, as usual.

And accordingly these two eccentric individuals left Adelaide next morning and sped away toward those unknown regions where Jos Merritt hoped to find at last the unique hat which was wanting to his collection.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EXPRESS FROM ADELAIDE.

SOME few days later, Mrs. Branican was also about to leave the South Australian capital. Tom Marix had recruited his full escort of fifteen white men who had belonged to local militias and fifteen natives who had already served in the governor's police force. This escort was needed, not to fight the Indas tribe but to protect the party against the nomads. What Harry Felton had said should not be forgotten: they should endeavor to free Captain John by means of a ransom rather than use violence with the natives who held him prisoner.

Two railroad wagons were filled with sufficient provisions for forty people for a whole year, and these, as we said, would be unloaded on their arrival at Farina Town. Every day a letter from Zach Fren, dated from the latter, acquainted Mrs. Branican with everything that was being done there,

The oxen and horses that he had bought, together with the men who were to act as drivers, were all ready. The wagons put up at the depot were waiting to receive the cases of provisions, the bales of clothing, the utensils, the ammunition, the tents, and in a word all the impedimenta of the expedition. Two days after the arrival of the goods the caravan could set off.

Mrs. Branican had fixed the 9th of September as the date of her leaving Adelaide. During a last conversation she had with the governor of the province, the latter did not conceal from the fearless woman what perils she was about to encounter.

"These dangers are of two kinds, Mrs. Branican," said he; "some arising from the cruelty of certain tribes that we have not mastered yet; others inherent to the nature of these very regions. Destitute of all resources, especially lacking water as they do,—for the rivers and wells are already dried up with the heat,—they have terrible hardships in store for you. For this reason perhaps it might have been better not to begin your campaign for another six months, not till the close of the warm season."

"I know, sir," replied Dolly, "and I am prepared for everything. When I left San Diego I began studying the Australian continent, through the works of those explorers who have traveled it, such as Burke, Stuart, Giles, Forrest, Sturt, Gregory, and Warburton. I have likewise been able to obtain the report of the courageous David Lindsay. I am fully aware of the fatigues and the dangers of such a journey. But I am going where my duty commands me to go."

"David Lindsay," replied the governor, "only followed the tracks that were already known, since the transcontinental telegraph line lies along them. Indeed, he only took with him one young native and four pack horses. You, Mrs. Branican, on the contrary, will be obliged to

head your expedition right away from this line, to the northwest of the continent as far as the deserts of Tasmania and Witt Land since your object is to meet the wandering tribes."

"I will go as far as will be necessary, sir," said Mrs. Branican. "What David Lindsay and his predecessors have done was in the interest of civilization, science, and commerce. What I will do will be to rescue my husband, now the only survivor of the *Franklin*. Ever since his disappearance, and contrary to universal opinion, I have always said that John Branican was alive, and I was right. For six months, for a year if needs be, I will scour those territories with the conviction that I will find him, and I will again prove myself in the right. I rely on the devotion of my companions, sir; and our motto will be, 'Forward, for aye.'"

"A noble motto, madam; and I doubt not but it will lead you to success."

"I am sure it will, with God's help!"

Mrs. Branican took leave of the governor, after thanking him for his kind help since her arrival in Adelaide. That very evening—the 9th of September—she left the capital.

Australian railroads could hardly be surpassed; comfortable cars that roll along without jolting; tracks whose excellent condition causes no more than an almost imperceptible vibration. Dolly's train was composed of six cars, counting the two baggage wagons. She occupied a reserved compartment with a woman named Harriet, of half Saxon, half native, origin, whom she had engaged as her maid. Tom Marix and his band were in the other carriages.

The train was not to stop except to take in a fresh supply of water and feul, and would only make short halts at the principal stations. Thus the trip would be shortened by about one-fourth.

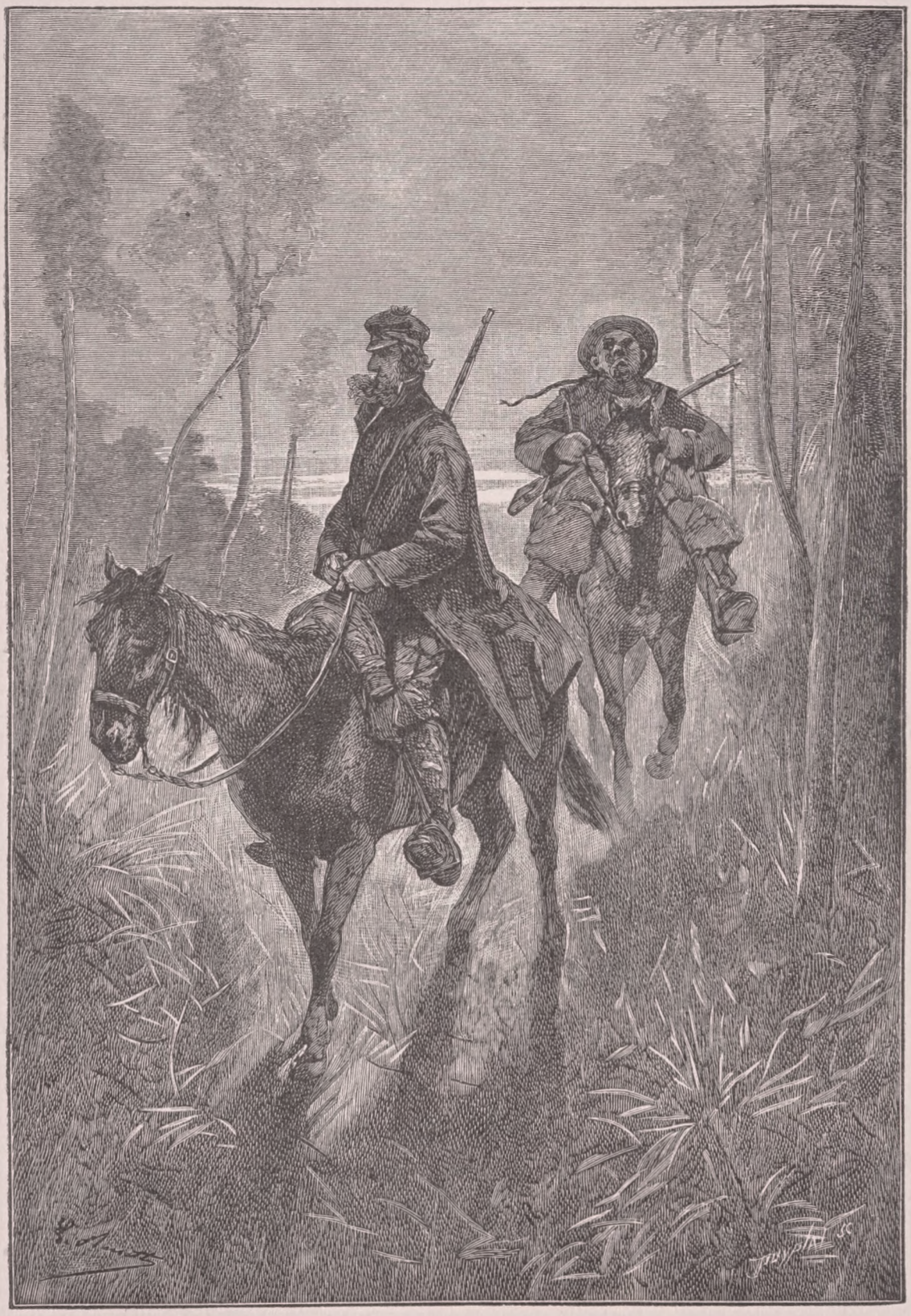
On leaving Adelaide, the train steamed on toward Gawler,

along the district of that name. To the right of the line rise some woody heights which overlook this part of the territory. Australian Mountains are not notable for their height, which scarcely ever reaches above 6000 feet; and they are in general on the line of the periphery of the continent. They chiefly consist of granite and silurian layers, which has led geologists to assign a very remote origin to them.

These parts being hilly, and intersected with gorges, compel the railroad to make numerous detours, now along narrow valleys, now in the middle of dense forests, where the growth of the eucalyptus is truly exuberant. A few degrees farther, when it will have run through the central plains, the railroad will be able to follow the unerring straight line which should be the characteristic feature of modern railroads.

At Gawler, where the main trunk sends off a branch toward Great Bend, the river Murray describes a sudden curve toward the south. And so river and train part company, and the latter running along the boundary line of the Light district, pushes on to Stanley, on the forty-fourth parallel. Had it not been dark, the summit of Mount Bryant could have been perceived, the highest point of the orographic expansion to the east of the railway line. Thenceforth the variations of the soil are more abundant on the west, and the road skirts the irregular foot of that chain, whose chief heights bear the names of Bluff, Remarkable, Brown, and Ardon, and whose furthest ramifications dwindle away on to the banks of Lake Torrens—a vast basin doubtless in communication with Spencer Gulf.

The following morning, at daybreak, the train passed within sight of the Flinders Ranges, and of Mount Serle, their extreme offshoot. From her window, Mrs. Branican contemplated these scenes so new for her. This, then, was that Australian land so justly styled the "land of para-



THE NEXT DAY THEY WERE OFF DUE NORTH (*p.* 231).

doxes," a land the center of which is but an immense depression below the level of the ocean ; where water-courses spring out of the sand and become gradually absorbed before they reach the sea ; where the air lacks moisture just as much as the soil ; where the strangest animals in the world increase and multiply ; where savage hordes of human beings lead their nomadic existence.

Yonder, to the northwest, lay those boundless deserts of Alexandra Land and Western Australia where Captain John should be sought. How would the rescuers direct their course when they had got beyond the hamlets and villages, when they had no other guidance but the meager indications gathered from Harry Felton on his deathbed ?

And in this connection, Mrs. Branican's attention had been drawn to one particular objection. Could it possibly be admitted that during the nine years he was now supposed to have been a prisoner among the natives, Captain John had never had an opportunity of escaping ?

To this his poor wife had but one answer to give : Harry Felton had distinctly stated that, throughout all those years, they had had but one such opportunity, and even that opportunity the captain had been unable to avail himself of.

As to the objection that it was not the practice with the aborigines to respect the life of their prisoners, they had done so, as a matter of fact, with the survivors of the *Franklin* disaster ; and of this Harry Felton had been an unanswerable proof. Indeed there was a precedent in the case of the explorer William Classen, who had disappeared thirty-eight years ago, and who was believed to be still with one of the tribes of northern Australia.

Now, was this not exactly the case of Captain John, with the additional testimony of the second officer's formal declaration ? Other travelers there are, who have never returned ; and there is no evidence of their not being alive

still. Who knows if those mysteries will not be cleared up some day ?

Meanwhile the train was speeding onward, and halted at none of the smaller stations. The weather was warm, the temperature the same as that of March in those countries of the northern hemisphere traversed by the thirtieth parallel, such as Algeria, Mexico, and Cochinchina. There were not wanting certain symptoms of a fall of rain or even one of those downpours that our travelers would in vain pray for, by and by, on the steppes of the interior. And in these conditions, about three o'clock in the afternoon, Mrs. Branican reached Farina Town station.

For the present, as we said, the railroad goes no farther. The engineers are busy planning its prolongation, in the direction of the Overland Telegraph Line, which goes on to the very coast of the Arafoura Sea.

Should it follow this line, it will have to turn to the west, in order to pass between Lake Torrens and Lake Eyre ; on the contrary it will travel to the east of this lake if it keeps along the meridian which the wires follow on their first leaving Adelaide.

Zach Fren and his men were all together at the depot when Mrs. Branican stepped from her car. Needless to say with what genuine sympathy and respectful cordiality they greeted her. The worthy boatswain was deeply moved. Twelve days, twelve long days without having seen Captain John's wife ! Such a thing had not happened him since the last time the *Dolly's Hope* had come home to San Diego. Dolly was delighted to see her companion again, her friend Zach, whose devotion she knew to be so true. She smiled as she held out her hand to him, she who had almost forgotten how to smile.

This station at Farina Town is of recent creation. There are modern maps on which it is not even marked. You can recognize here the embryo of one of those towns which

English and American railroads create along their course, even as trees produce fruit ; but this fruit ripens quickly, thanks to the improvising and practical genius of the Saxon race. And such or such a station, which is in reality no more than a village, already shows by its general appearance, its squares, streets, and avenues that it will become a town in a short space of time.

This was the case with Farina Town, at that time the terminus of the Adelaide line.

Mrs. Branican was not to sojourn long here. Zach Fren had proved himself as intelligent as active. The commissariat portion of the expedition collected by him consisted in four wagons drawn by oxen, with their drivers, two buggies with a pair of strong horses each, also the drivers belonging to them. The wagons were already loaded with the various articles of camping material that had been forwarded from Adelaide. When the stores from the train would be packed on them, they would be ready to start. It would mean a delay of twenty-four or thirty-six hours.

This very day Mrs. Branican inspected this considerable stock in detail ; and Tom Marix, in so far as his escort was concerned, approved of every measure taken by Zach Fren. Under such conditions they would, without difficulty, reach the extreme limit of that region within which the horses and cattle would find grass and water, but beyond which the tiniest spring of water would become a scarcity,

" Mrs. Branican," said Tom Marix, " so long as we follow the telegraph line, the country will supply our wants, and our animals will not suffer much. But as soon as we turn westward, we will have to get camels both for pack and saddle, instead of our horses and oxen. They alone can stand the burning heat and do without water for the several days which sometimes separate one well from another."

" I know that, Marix," replied Dolly, " and I will trust to

your experience. We will change our mounts on our arrival at Alice Spring, and I hope it may be soon."

"The men with the camels started off four days ago," observed Fren. "They'll wait for us there till we come."

"And do not forget, madam," added Tom Marix, "that there the real difficulties of your journey will only commence."

"We will get over them!" replied Dolly.

And so, according to the carefully drawn plan, the first part of the trip was about to be accomplished with the horses, buggies, and wagons. Out of the thirty members of the escort the fifteen white men were to be mounted; but as those thick forests and capriciously undulating territories would not allow of very long stages, the blacks could without difficulty follow on foot. When the contemplated change would be made at Alice Spring, the camels would be reserved for the white men engaged in reconnoitering, either in search of information regarding the whereabouts of wandering tribes, or in quest of the wells scattered over the deserts.

It is worthy of note here that this is the mode of transcontinental traveling adopted ever since camels have been so advantageously introduced into Australia. The explorers at the time of Burke and Sturt would not have been subjected to such hardships, could they have had these useful animals at their disposal. It was in 1866 that Mr. Elder imported them from India in considerable quantities, with a certain number of Afghan drivers, and they have since then thrived and prospered. It is no doubt thanks to their use that Colonel Warburton was able to achieve that daring campaign, from Alice Spring to Rockbonne on the coast of Witt Land on Nickel Bay. Later on, if David Lindsay succeeded in crossing the continent from north to south with pack-horses, it was owing, as was remarked previously, to his having kept within those districts over which

"OH, IT'S HIM, SURE ENOUGH!" (*p.* 233).

the telegraph line runs and where he found water and fodder.

And while talking of those adventurous explorers, who do not hesitate facing dangers and fatigues of all kinds, Zach Fren incidentally remarked :

"You know, Mrs. Branican, that there are folks ahead of us on the road to Alice Spring ?"

"Ahead of us, Zach ?"

"Yes, ma'am. Don't you remember the Englishman and his Chinese servant who took passage on the *Brisbane* from Melbourne to Adelaide ?"

"Yes, I do," replied Dolly, "but they landed at Adelaide. Did they not stay there ?"

"No, ma'am. Three days ago, Jos Merritt—that's his name—landed by rail at Farina Town. He asked me a number of questions about our trip, what route we would take and all that ; and all he said, every time, was 'Right, that's quite right,' while his Chinaman nodded his head back and forward, as much as to say, 'I don't think it's all right, I don't !' Then, the next day, at daybreak, they were off, both of them, due north."

"And how are they traveling ?" inquired Dolly.

"On horseback ; but once they reach Alice Spring, they will sort of change their steamer for a sailing vessel—just like ourselves."

"Is this Englishman an explorer then ?"

"He doesn't look much like one. I guess he looks a great deal more like a crank than like a souwester !"

"And he did not say why he was thus going off into the wilds of Australia ?"

"No, ma'am. Anyhow, having no one but his Chinaman, I reckon he won't expose himself beyond the inhabited part of the country. A pleasant trip to him ! Maybe we'll drop on him again at Alice Spring !"

The following day, the 11th of September, at five o'clock

in the afternoon everything was in readiness. The wagons had been loaded with sufficient provisions for the whole journey. They consisted in preserved meat and vegetables of the best American brands, flour, tea, sugar, and salt, not to speak of the useful stock contained in the medicine chest. The supply of whisky, gin, and brandy filled a certain number of small casks, which would, later on, be put on the backs of the camels. A considerable quantity of tobacco also figured among the provisions—an item all the more indispensable as, besides being of use to the members of the expedition, it would be a convenient medium of exchange with the natives, who use it as currency. With tobacco and brandy one could buy up all the tribes of Western Australia. A large portion of this tobacco, a few rolls of prints, and a quantity of knickknacks was to be the price of Captain John's ransom.

As to the camping material, tents, blankets, bales of clothing, and linen, the personal luggage of Mrs. Branican and her maid Harriet, of Zach Fren and of the leader of the escort, the necessary utensils for the cooking, petroleum for fuel, the ammunition of lead and bullet, cartridges for the fowling-pieces and the arms intrusted to Tom Marix's men, all these were on the wagons.

Mrs. Branican, naturally impatient to be *en route*, fixed the departure for the next day. It was agreed that at dawn the caravan would leave Farina Town, and set out northward along the Overland Telegraph Line.

That evening about nine o'clock, Dolly and her maid had just returned home to their little house near the depot, accompanied by Zach Fren. The door had been locked, and all three were about retiring to their respective rooms when a light knock was heard at the street entrance.

Zach Fren opened the door, and could not keep back an exclamation of surprise.

Before him, a bundle under his arm and his cap in his hand, stood the apprentice of the *Brisbane*.

In truth, it seemed as though Mrs. Branican had guessed it was he! Yes! And how was this to be explained? Although she did not expect to see him any more, had she a presentiment that he would endeavor to meet her again? Be that as it may, the name "Godfrey!" instinctively burst from her lips before she could possibly see him.

Godfrey had arrived by train from Adelaide half an hour previously.

A few days before the departure of the steamer, he had asked the captain of the *Brisbane* for his pay, and had come ashore. Once there, he had refrained from calling at Mrs. Branican's hotel in King William Street; but how often he had followed her without being seen, without seeking the least opportunity to speak to her! Meanwhile he had kept posted up on what was going on; he had ascertained that Zach Fren had gone to Farina Town to organize the expedition; and then, when Mrs. Branican herself had left Adelaide, he, too, started off, determined to keep within sight of her.

What was his ultimate object? Why had he thus thrown up his position? Dolly was not to be long in ignorance on this point.

Godfrey had been brought in and stood before her.

"It is you, my boy? You, Godfrey?" she asked, taking him by the hand.

"Oh, it's him, sure enough, and what does he want now?" grumbled Zach Fren.

"Mrs. Branican," exclaimed Godfrey, "what I want is to go with you, ma'am! I want to be with you anywhere you go, and never to leave you again! I want to be one of the party that will look for Captain Branican, and find him, and fetch him home, and bring him back to San Diego."

Dolly could not contain her emotion. In the lad's every feature she could see John, her well beloved John.

And he, at her knees, his hands stretched toward her, kept on repeating:

"Do take me with you, won't you, ma'am?"

"You shall come, my child, you shall!" cried Dolly; and she clasped him in her arms.

CHAPTER V.

ACROSS SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

THE caravan set out at daybreak on the 12th of September.

The weather was fine, the heat cooled by a gentle breeze. A few light clouds lessened the strength of the sun's rays. Under this 31st parallel, and at this time of the year, the warm season was setting in in earnest in the zone of the Australian continent. Explorers know but too well how terrible this season is in the central plains, where the sweltering human being finds neither rain nor shade.

It was a pity that circumstances had not permitted Mrs. Branican to undertake her campaign five or six months sooner. During the winter the hardships of such a journey would have been bearable. The cold—which sometimes causes the thermometer to fall as low as freezing point—is less to be feared than the heat, which raises the mercury above forty degrees C. in the shade. Previously to the month of May, the moisture in the air comes down in abundant showers, the creeks revive and the wells fill up. No need to travel for days in search of water, under a boiling sun. The Australian desert is less merciful to caravans than the African Sahara: the latter possesses oases

that are wanting to the other ; the former may be justly called " the land of thirst ! "

But Mrs. Branican did not have the choice of time or district. She set out because she should do so ; she would face these terrible contingencies of the climate because they had to be confronted. There should be no delay in finding Captain John, in tearing him away from the natives, were she to succumb through it, as Harry Felton had done. True, the privations undergone by this unfortunate man were not in store for her expedition, organized as it was with a view to overcome all possible difficulties, so far, at least, as it was practically and morally possible.

The party now consisted of forty-one persons, since Godfrey's arrival. The following was the marching order adopted on their way north of Farina Town, in the midst of forests and along creeks which, as yet, presented no serious obstacles.

Right ahead was a vanguard of fifteen Australian natives, dressed in jackets and pants of white cotton stuff, straw hats on their heads, and, as usual, barefooted, armed with a rifle and a revolver each, and a round of cartridges in their belts; they were commanded by a white man, who acted as scout.

After them, in a buggy drawn by two horses and driven by a native, came Mrs. Branican and Harriet. A hood, fitted in such a way that it could be let down when needed, would shelter them in case of rain or storm.

In the other buggy were seated Zach Fren and Godfrey. Whatever annoyance the boatswain may have felt at the young apprentice's arrival, it was not long ere he grew very fond of him, seeing the affection he showed Mrs. Branican.

The four ox-wagons came next, guided by four drivers, and the speed of the caravan would be adapted to the pace of these animals, whose recent introduction into Australia

has proved a considerable addition to the usual means of transportation and of agricultural labor.

On each side and in the rear rode the remainder of the escort, dressed like their leader, Tom Marix, pants tucked into their boots, a woolen jacket fastened by a belt, a white cotton helmet, a light rubber cloak slung over their shoulders, and armed in the same way as their colored companions. These men, being on horseback, were intended for the reconoitering of the route, or scouting ahead to find a suitable camping ground for the midday rest or the evening halt.

In this way the caravan could cover from twelve to thirteen miles a day, over very uneven ground, sometimes through thick forests, in which the wagons made but little headway. At night the organizing of the camp devolved on Tom Marix, who was an experienced hand at this task. Then the little party settled down to rest and started again at sunrise the next morning.

The journey from Farina Town to Alice Spring—about 350 miles—not presenting any serious dangers or great fatigues, would probably require about thirty days, and would not be completed, therefore, before the first eight or ten days in October.

On leaving Farina Town, they were able to follow, for a certain number of miles, the line of the works undertaken for the continuation of the railroad. They then turned west of the Williowan Range, taking the direction already marked out by the poles of the Overland telegraph line.

While going along, Mrs. Branican asked Tom Marix, who was riding by the side of her buggy, several questions about this line.

"It was in 1870, madam," said he, "sixteen years after the declaration of independence of South Australia, that the colonists thought of putting up these wires between Port Adelaide and Port Darwin,—from the south to the north

of the continent. The works were carried on with such activity that they were completed about the middle of 1872."

"But had not the continent to be explored first, from one end to the other?" asked Mrs. Branican.

"It had, of course; ten years before that, in 1861, one of our most daring explorers had not only crossed it, but taken some observations to the east and west as well."

"And who was the constructor of this line?" asked Dolly.

"An engineer, as bold as he was skilled, Mr. Todd, postmaster-general of Adelaide, a fellow-citizen of ours whom Australia honors as he deserves to be."

"Was he able to find here the necessary material for such an undertaking?"

"No, madam," replied Tom Marix, "he was obliged to get the insulators, the wire, and even the posts from Europe. Nowadays the colony would be able to furnish materials for any kind of industrial enterprise."

"Did the natives allow him to work without interfering?"

"At first they did better, or rather worse than interfering, Mrs. Branican. They destroyed the materials: the wires for the metal, and the posts to make hatchets. Hence over a distance of 1850 miles there were incessant encounters with the natives, although not to their advantage. Still they would persist in making trouble, and really I believe the work would have been abandoned, had not Mr. Todd been struck with an idea worthy of an engineer, of a genius even. He captured a few native chiefs and gave them a certain number of electric shocks by means of a strong battery, and they were at the same time so frightened and so thoroughly shaken that their comrades never dared to come near the poles again. The line was then completed and it now works regularly."

"Is it not taken care of by agents?" asked Mrs. Branican.

"By agents, no," replied Tom Marix, "but by the colored police."

"And don't these police ever go as far as the central or western regions!"

"Never, or at least hardly ever, madam. There are so many thieves, bushrangers, and others to look after in the inhabited districts!"

"But how is it no one ever thought of sending this police after the Indas, when it was known that Captain Branican was their prisoner—and that for so many years?"

"You forget, madam, that we have been aware of it, and you yourself have only heard about it through Harry Felton, a few weeks ago at most!"

"You are right," replied Dolly, "just a few weeks!"

"I do know for a fact," continued Marix, "that the colored police have received orders to explore round about Tasmania, and that a strong detachment is to be sent out that way, but I greatly fear——"

Tom Marix stopped. Mrs. Branican had not perceived his hesitation.

The truth is, that determined as he was to fulfill to the very letter the duties he had accepted, Tom Marix looked upon the result of this search as very doubtful. He knew how hard it was to catch those nomad tribes of Australia. So he could not share either the ardent faith of Mrs. Branican, or Zach Fren's conviction, or yet Godfrey's instinctive trust. Still, as a matter of course, he would be faithful to his duty.

On the evening of the 15th, round a bend of the Deroy hills, the caravan encamped at the village of Boorloo. To the north could be seen the summit of Mount Attraction, beyond which lie Illusion Plains. From the bringing together of these names is the reader to conclude that if the mountain is attractive the plain is deceptive? This may not be the place to enter into the subject; but the

nomenclature of Australian cartography does contain names which really seem to have a moral as well as a physical import.

It is at Boorloo that the telegraph line swerves almost at right angles toward the west, and a dozen miles farther on it crosses Cabanna Creek. But what is a simple matter for aërial wires stretched from one pole to another is not so easy for a party of pedestrians and horsemen ; and here a fordable passage had to be discovered. The young apprentice would not leave to others the credit of finding one. Resolutely plunging into the swift and tumultuous current, he found a bank, which enabled the wagons and carts to reach the other side at no greater depth than the height of their axle-trees.

On the 17th the expedition encamped on the last ramifications of the Northwest Mountain, which rises some ten miles further south.

The country being inhabited, Mrs. Branican and her companions received the warmest welcome in one of those immense farms, the area of which in actual use covers several thousand acres. Sheep farming on a large scale, the growing of wheat on wide treeless plains, the cultivation of sorgho and millet, immense tracts ready for the seeds of the forthcoming season, plantations of olive trees and other indigenous growths of these warm latitudes, several hundred heads of cattle for the plow and the cart, a number of hands proportionate to the requirements of such extensive labors,—hands subjected to a quasi-military discipline which reduces man almost to slavery,—of such are made up those domains that are the wealth of the inland provinces of the Australian continent. If Mrs. Branican had not been sufficiently supplied with provisions at the start, she would have found all she needed there, thanks to the generosity of the rich farmers, the "free-selecters," who own these agricultural stations.

These huge industrial centers are now on the increase; and large districts that the absence of water rendered unproductive are on the point of being cultivated. In truth, the subsoil of the country then traveled over by our party, ten or twelve miles southwest of Lake Eyre, was intersected with limpid streams; and the artesian wells recently constructed yielded already up to 300,000 gallons per day.

The 18th of September, Tom Marix established the camp for the night at the southern extremity of South Lake Eyre, a lake of considerable size, the overflow of North Lake Eyre. On its woody banks could be seen a flock of those curious wading birds, of which the "jabiru" is the most remarkable specimen, and flocks of black swans mixed up with cormorants, pelicans, and herons with white, gray, or blue plumage.

A strange geographical disposition is that of the said lakes. They succeed each other in a line from the south to the north of Australia, like so many beads on one long thread: first, Lake Torrens with the railroad skirting its banks, then the smaller Lake Eyre, the larger lake of the same name, and lastly, lakes Frome, Blanche, and Amédei. They are sheets of saltish water, remnants of some old inland sea, which owe their preservation to the natural receptacles in which we now find them.

As a fact, geologists are inclined to the belief that this continent was once divided into two islands,—at a period indeed not very far remote. It had been already noticed that the periphery of the continent shows a tendency to rise higher and higher above the level of the sea, and there seems to be little doubt but the center is subject to a continual rising. The ancient basin will, therefore, become filled up in the course of time; and thus will disappear the lakes now scattered along the 130th and the 140th degrees of latitude.

Between the extremity of South Lake Eyre and Emerald

FORDING CABANNA CREEK (*p.* 239).

Spring station, where they arrived on the evening of the 30th of September, our travelers covered a distance of about seventeen miles, across a country covered with magnificent forests, the trees of which rose to a height of 250 feet.

Accustomed as was Dolly to the forests of California, and their gigantic sequoias, she could have admired this marvelous vegetation, had not her thoughts been constantly turned toward the northwest to those barren deserts where the sandy downs can barely afford nourishment for a few stunted shrubs. She saw nothing of these gigantic ferns, of which Australia possesses the most remarkable kinds, nothing of those enormous groves of eucalypti with weeping foliage, grouped here and there on the slight undulations of the soil.

It is curious to observe the absence of brushwood at the foot of these trees ; the ground on which they thrive is clear of brambles and thorns ; their lowest branches are from twelve to fifteen feet above the soil. Nothing remains on it but a kind of golden yellow grass, which never dries up. The animals have destroyed the young plants, and the fires made by the squatters have burnt up bush and shrub alike. So, although no actual tracks exist across these vast forests, so different from the forests in Africa, through which you can plod on for six months without coming to an issue, locomotion here is but little impeded.

The buggies and wagons moved on with comparative ease between these widely scattered trees, under their lofty covering of foliage.

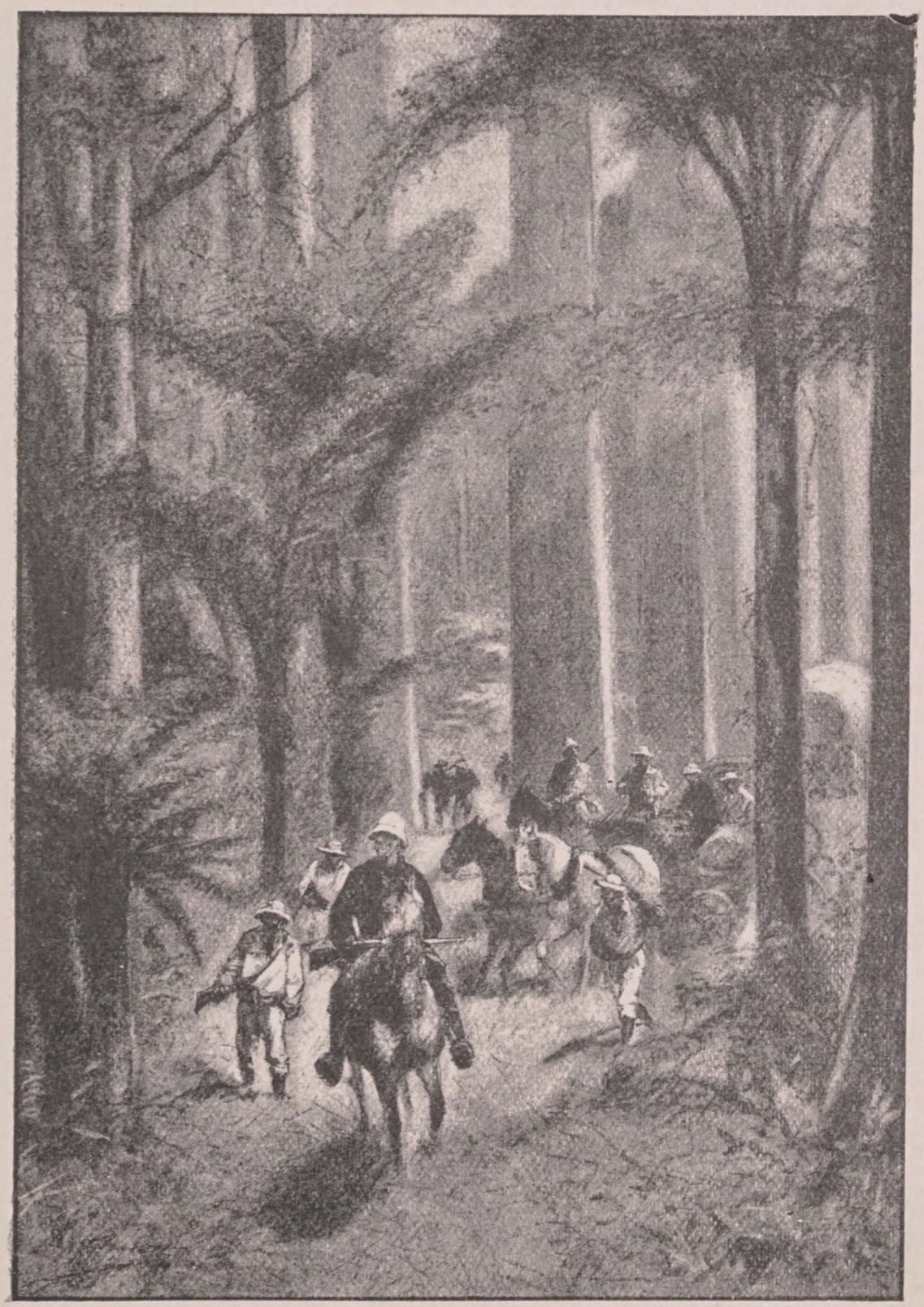
Besides, Tom Marix knew the country well, having crossed it over and over again at the head of the Adelaide police. Mrs. Branican could not have entrusted herself to a better or more devoted guide. No escort chief could have coupled so much zeal with so much intelligence.

Over and above this, Tom Marix had found a young, active, and resolute helper in the apprentice, who had shown so strong an attachment for Dolly ; indeed, the ardor displayed by this youth of fourteen was hardly short of surprising. Godfrey spoke of going alone, if necessary, into the interior of the country. If ever traces of Captain John were discovered, it would be difficult, nay impossible, to hold him back. Everything in him was enthusiasm when he spoke of the missing captain; his perseverance in studying the map of central Australia, in taking notes, and setting out for information during the halts instead of taking a much needed rest after the long day's journey, everything bespoke an energy of purpose that nothing could moderate. Very robust for his age, already hardened by his rough, seafaring life, he was almost always out of sight, ahead of the caravan. If ever he kept in his place it was only at Dolly's expressed desire. Neither Zach Fren nor Tom Marix, although Godfrey showed great friendship for them, could have got from him what she obtained with a single look. No wonder if, yielding to her instinctive feelings in the presence of this lad,—John's second self,—she allowed her affection for him to grow into a mother's love. If Godfrey was not her son according to nature's law, he would be so at least by the laws of adoption. Godfrey should never leave her again—and John, she felt confident, would have the same affection for him as she had.

One day, after an absence during which he had pushed several miles ahead of the caravan, Dolly said to him :

"My child, I want you to promise me never to go off in this way without my consent. When you are away I am uneasy until you are back again. You leave us sometimes for hours together in ignorance of your whereabouts."

"But you see, madam," replied he, "I must be on the lookout for information. A native tribe had been signaled



THEY MOVED ON WITH COMPARATIVE EASE BETWEEN THE WIDELY SCATTERED TREES (*p.* 241).

as camping on Warmer Creek. I wanted to see the chief and question him."

"And what did he say?" asked Dolly.

"He did hear of a white man coming from the west who was making his way toward Queensland."

"Who was this man?"

"I found out at last that it was Harry Felton he was talking about, not Captain Branican. But we will find him yet! That you may be sure of! You have been a mother to me, madam. Well, I love him just as much as I love you!"

"A mother!" Dolly said to herself.

"Only I know you, whereas Captain John, I have never seen him except for that photograph that you gave me! I always carry it about with me, and sometimes I talk to it, and I imagine it answers me."

"You shall know him one day, my child," replied Dolly, "and he will be even as I am to you!"

The 24th of September, after camping at Strangway Spring, beyond Warmer Creek, the caravan halted at William Spring, forty-two miles north of Emerald Station.

From this name "Spring," given to so many different stations, it may be surmised that the water supply is rather abundant on the territories traversed by the telegraph line. Already, however, the warm season was sufficiently advanced to have almost dried up these springs, and it was no hard task to find a ford whenever the party came to a creek.

It could be observed besides that as yet the powerful vegetation showed no signs of diminishing. If villages were met with but at long intervals, farm houses were seen continually. Hedges of thorny acacias, with which the air was perfumed, intermingled with sweet briar, formed an impenetrable enclosure. As to the forests, which were becoming thinner, the European trees, the oak, the plane,

the willow, the poplar, and the tamarind, were getting rarer, and in their stead were found quantities of eucalyptus and spotted gum trees.

"Well, those are funny trees!" cried Zach Fren, the first time he saw fifty of those gum trees in one huge clump. "You'd think their trunks were painted with all the colors of the rainbow."

"What you take for a coat of paint, friend Zach," replied Tom Marix, "is their natural color. The bark of those trees takes a different color according as vegetation is forward or slow. Here are some that are white, others pink, and more again red. Here! look at those yonder; the trunks are streaked with blue stripes or spotted with yellow patches."

"That's another freak to be added to the other funny things of your continent, Tom!"

"Funny if you like; but believe me, Zach, you pay my countrymen a compliment when you tell them so often that their country resembles no other. However, it will not be perfect until——"

"Until there isn't a single native left, I suppose!" replied Zach Fren.

Another remarkable fact was that in spite of the insufficient foliage of these trees, birds resorted to them in great numbers.

Magpies and paroquets, cockatoos with snow-white plumage, laughing ocelots, which in M. D. Charnay's opinion would be better named "sobbing ocelots"; then red-breasted "tantolas" whose cackle never ceases, flying squirrels, and chief among them, the polatouche, which sportsmen attract by imitating the cries of nocturnal birds; birds of paradise, and notably the velvety rifle-bird, looked upon as the most beautiful specimen of Australian birds; lastly, on the lagoons or the marshes, couples of storks and

of those palmiped lotus birds that can run along on the leaves of the water-lilies.

On the other hand hares abounded; and many of them, not to speak of partridges and ducks, were of course brought down by Tom Marix,—which was so much of a saving for the provisions of the expedition. This game was simply broiled or roasted at night over the camp-fire. Now and again iguanas' eggs were found, which the blacks delighted to eat.

As to the creeks, they still provided some perch, a few long-snouted pike, numbers of mullets, so nimble that they jumped over the fisherman's head, and above all swarms of eels. Now and again precautions had to be taken against crocodiles, which are very dangerous in their element. From all this comes the conclusion that lines and nets are appliances with which the Australian explorer should supply himself, according to the strict recommendation given by Colonel Warburton.

On the morning of the 29th our party left Umbum Station and set out over a hilly ground, very hard for pedestrians. Forty-eight hours later, to the west of Denison Ranges, they reached Peak Station, recently constructed for the use of the telegraph company.

As Mrs. Branican had learnt from Marix's detailed account of Sturt's travels, it was from this point that the explorer had started north, across territories previously almost unknown.

From this station, for a distance of about sixty miles, they experienced a foretaste of the fatigues in store for them on the Australian desert. Their course lay over a very arid soil, as far as the banks of the Macumba River, then for about an equal distance, under equally trying conditions, up to the station at Lady Charlotte.

On these vast hilly plains, varied here and there by a few

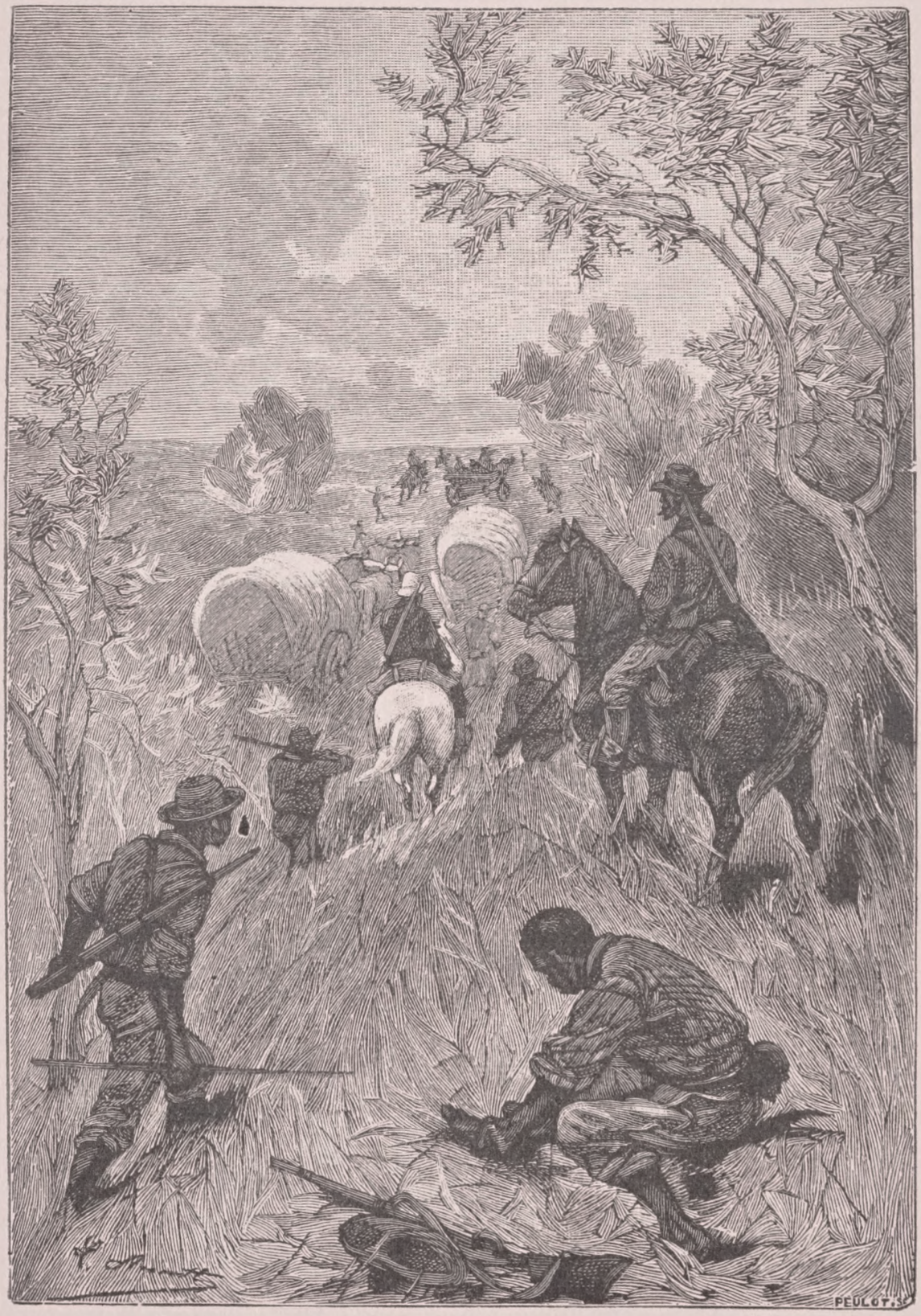
clumps of trees with faded foliage, game, if game it could be called, was never wanting. There kangoroos indulged in their ungainly jumps and wallabis leaped prodigious distances. Then oppossums, bandicoots and dyasures, nestled,—" nestled " is the only word,—on the topmost branches of the gum trees. Now and again were seen couples of cassowaries, eagle-like for the bold, piercing glance of their eye, but whose flesh, unlike that of the eagle, affords pleasant and nutritious food, almost identical to beef. The trees were bunga-bungas, a kind of arancarias growing to a height of 250 feet in the north and west of Queensland. In these parts they were of smaller size and yielded a large nut, fairly good as food, which the natives are in the habit of using as such.

Tom Marix had taken care to put his companions on their guard against bears, whose favorite lair is frequently the hollow trunk of a gum tree. This they soon found to be true, but the "potorous," as they are called here, were hardly more formidable than ordinary marsupians with overgrown claws.

As to natives, the caravan had up to this hardly met with any. It is to the north, east, and west of the Overland telegraph line that the tribes roam along from one camp to another.

While journeying through these districts, daily growing more and more barren, Tom Marix had occasion to avail himself of a very peculiar instinct of the oxen yoked to the wagons. This instinct, which seems to have developed among them since their introduction, enables these animals to make their way to creeks, where they will be able to quench their thirst. They seldom make a mistake, and the traveler may follow them blindly. Another display of instinct on their part is sometimes greatly appreciated.

Thus, on the morning of October 7th, the oxen of the leading wagon suddenly came to a standstill, and their



A Foretaste of Fatigues in Store (*p.* 245).

example was immediately followed by the others. In vain did the drivers goad them on : they would not move a step.

Tom Marix, at once advised of the matter, rode up to Mrs. Branican's buggy.

"I know what it is, madam," said he. "We have not met with any natives yet, but I am sure we are now crossing a habitual track of theirs, and as our oxen have scented their trail, they decline to move on."

"And why so ?" asked Dolly.

"The exact reason is not known," replied Marix, "but the fact still remains. The way I am inclined to explain it is that the first oxen imported here were so badly used by the natives that they always remembered this ill treatment, and that the recollection of it has been transmitted from generation to generation."

Whether this singular example of atavism suggested by the escort chief was the reason of their obstinacy or not, it was very evident the oxen could not be made to move forward. They had to be unyoked, and then with whip and goad were compelled to walk backwards about twenty steps. In this way they crossed the path followed by the natives, whereupon they were put to again and the wagons resumed their course northward.

When the party reached the banks of the Macumba River they were all able to satisfy their thirst. True, the heat had already brought down the level of the stream to one-half its usual height. But where there is not water enough to float a canoe there is more than sufficient to quench the thirst of forty people and twenty heads of cattle.

On the 6th, the caravan crossed Hamilton Creek on the half covered stones which almost filled its bed ; by the 8th it had left Mount Hammersley to the east ; and on the morning of the 10th it reached Lady Charlotte station, having covered 320 miles since it left Farina Town.

Mrs. Branican was now on the borderline separating

South Australia from Alexandra Land, also called the Northern Territory. It was Sturt who made this territory known in 1860, when he pushed his exploration along the 131st meridian as far as the 21st degree of latitude.

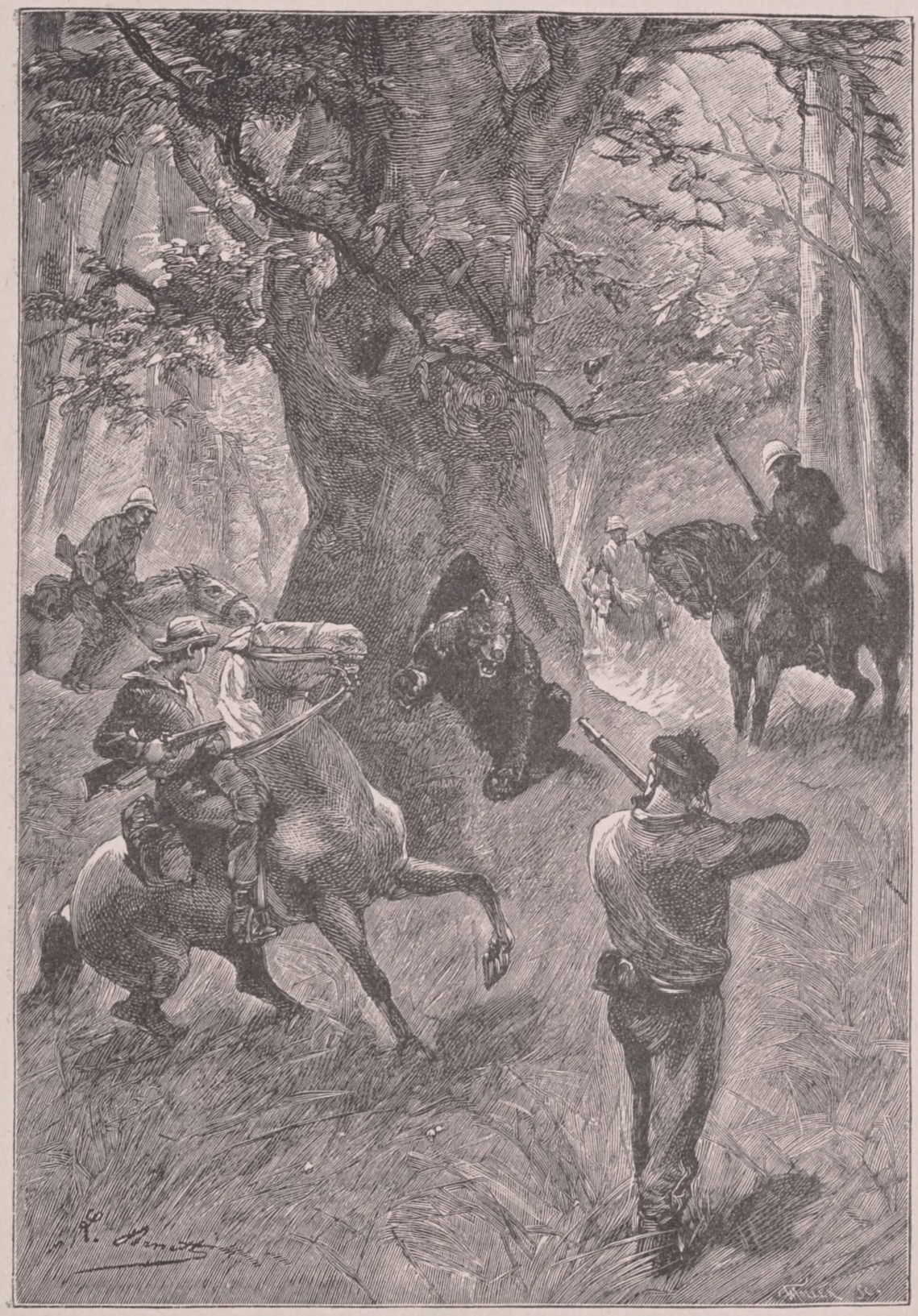
CHAPTER VI.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

TOM MARIX suggested to Mrs. Branican the advisability of taking twenty-four hours' rest at Lady Charlotte station. Although the journey had been effected without much difficulty, the heat had told on the animals. It was a long way to Alice Spring yet, and it was of importance that the wagons carrying the baggage should reach there safely.

Dolly readily assented to so reasonable a proposal, and preparations were hastily made for a halt. A few huts were all that this station consisted of, the population of which was about being trebled for one day by the rescuing party. A camp had, therefore, to be set up. But a rich squatter in the immediate vicinity offered Mrs. Branican more comfortable quarters, and he pressed them upon her so cordially that she needs should accept his invitation and repair to Waldeck Hill, where a comfortable dwelling was placed at her disposal.

This squatter was only the tenant of one of those vast domains called "runs" in Australia. Some of these runs comprise no fewer than 600,000 acres, and even more, particularly in Victoria. Although Waldeck Hill was not of such dimensions, it was, none the less, considerable. Surrounded with paddocks, it was especially devoted to sheep farming,—a business necessitating a number of employees, of shepherds to mind the flocks, and of those wild dogs whose bark resembles so closely the howl of a wolf.



THEIR FAVORITE LAIR IS THE HOLLOW TRUNK OF A GUM TREE (*p.* 246).

The nature of the soil is the primary consideration when the starting of a run is in contemplation, plains on which the salt bush grows spontaneously being preferred. These bushes contain a nutritious sap which recalls the taste of asparagus, or sometimes that of aniseed, and are greedily sought after by the "pig-faced" sheep, the usual breed in these parts.

When, on examination, the ground has been found fit for pasture land, a crop of grass is at once raised on it, but this is for the benefit of bulls and cows; for the sheep, whose tastes, it seems, are more fastidious, will eat none but the finer growth of the second crop.

It must not be forgotten that the wool of these sheep is the main source of Australia's great wealth, and that at present there are no less than 100,000,000 representatives of the ovine race on that continent.

On the run at Waldeck Hill, around the principal building and the dwellings of the workmen, there were large ponds fed from a well supplied creek, in which to wash the animals before they were shorn. In front were the sheds in which the squatter kept the bales of wool previous to forwarding them to Adelaide.

This happened to be shearing time at the run. A few days before, a band of itinerant shearers had called, as is usual, to ply their lucrative industry; and when Mrs. Branican, accompanied by Zach Fren, appeared on the scene, they were struck with the surprising animation that reigned there. The men, being on "piece-work," did not lose a moment, and, as the more skillful can shear a hundred sheep a day, they can make as much as five dollars in that time. The creaking of the huge shears, the bleating of the animals when they received an accidental cut, the shouts of the men, the going and coming of the workmen who carried the wool to the sheds, all this was curious to note. And above the din could be heard the voices of the young

lads calling, "tar! tar!" as they brought pails of this liquid from one to the other, to heal the wounds inflicted by the more careless shearers.

For all these people overseers are required if the work is to be well done; nor were they wanting at Waldeck Hill; indeed, over and above the clerks in the office, there were a dozen men and women whose duty it was to see that others did their duty.

And what was Mrs. Branican's surprise—more than surprise, her bewilderment—when she heard her name spoken a few paces behind her! And at the same instant a woman ran up to her, threw herself at her knees, with outstretched hands and beseeching look.

It was Jane Burker—Jane, less aged by years than by trouble, gray haired, sunburnt, almost unrecognizable, and yet instantly recognized by Dolly.

"Jane!" she gasped.

And lifting her up, she clasped her in her arms.

How had the Burkers lived during these twelve years? A miserable life,—and even a criminal life, in so far as Jane's husband was concerned.

On leaving San Diego, under the circumstances that we know, Len Burker had concealed himself in Mazatlan, one of the ports on the west coast of Mexico. It will be remembered that he had left the colored woman Nô at Prospect House, in charge of Dolly Branican, who had not recovered her senses at that time yet. But shortly after, when the poor invalid was placed by Mr. Andrew under Dr. Brumley's care, the discharged servant had made her way to her master's hiding place, which she was, of course, acquainted with.

Naturally, Len Burker had assumed a false name at Mazatlan and the Californian police failed to track him. In any case he remained but a few weeks in that town. Two or three thousand piasters—the remains of his ill-

gotten funds, and of Mrs. Branican's little fortune in particular—were all he possessed. Continuing his business in the United States was out of the question ; he therefore resolved to leave America. Australia struck him as a favorable field wherein to try his luck at any price before he should be reduced to his last dollar.

Jane, ever under the absolute command of her husband, had not the courage to resist him. Mrs. Branican, her only relative, was now lost to the world. As to Captain John, his fate could no longer be doubted. The *Franklin* had perished with all hands. John would never return to San Diego. Nothing would now save Jane from the path on when Len Burker was hurrying her along, and in this way she was carried off to Australia.

It was at Sydney that Len Burker landed, and there he spent his last resources in starting a new "business." Avoiding certain "mistakes" he had committed at San Diego, he was able to make fresh dupes, but it was not long before he plunged into adventurous schemes, and soon lost the little profit his cunning had at first procured him.

Eighteen months after his landing in Australia, Len Burker had to leave Sydney. Reduced to a penurious condition which bordered on poverty, he was obliged to seek his luck elsewhere. Nor did fortune favor him in Brisbane, from which town he had soon to run away for safety to the furthermost district of Queensland.

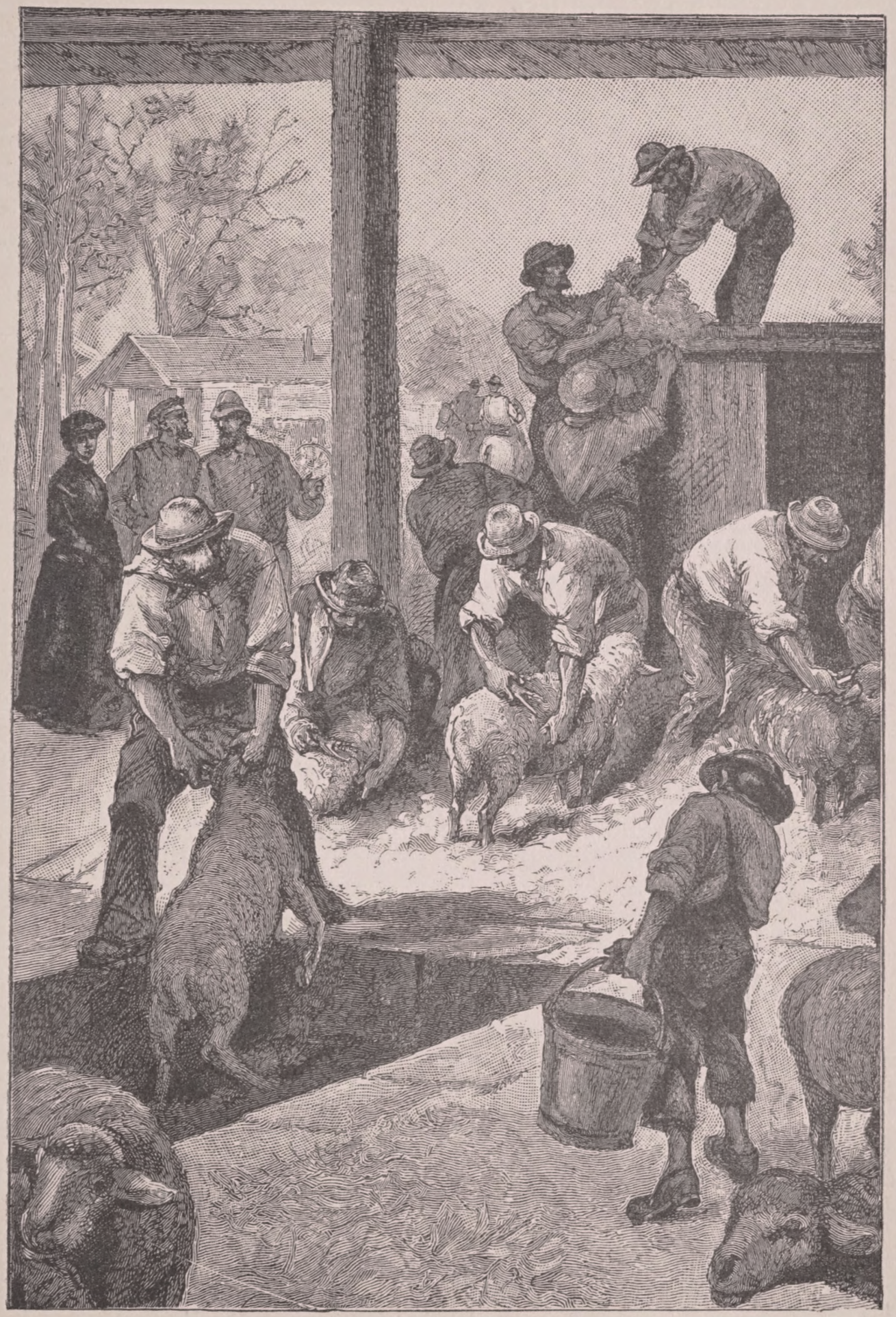
Jane always followed him. Resigned to her fate, she was reduced to manual labor to provide means for their sustenance. Harshly, coarsely treated by the colored servant, who was still Len Burker's evil genius, how often the unfortunate woman thought of running away, of breaking with her present existence, its humiliations and its sorrows. But this was above her strength, or rather her weakness. The poor dog, daily kicked and buffeted, will not leave his master's house !

By this time Len Burker had heard, through the newspapers, of the endeavors made to find the survivors of the *Franklin.* Those two voyages of the *Dolly's Hope*, undertaken at Mrs. Branican's desire, had led him to other discoveries: Dolly had recovered her reason after four years' stay in Dr. Brumley's asylum; meanwhile her uncle Edward Starter had died in Tennessee, and his enormous fortune had enabled her to fit out these two expeditions to the Malay Seas and to the North Australian shores. The final result of all the searching was that the remains of the *Franklin* had been found on the rocks of Browse Island, and that the last of the survivors had perished on that island.

Between Dolly's fortune and Jane, her only heiress, the only obstacle was a bereaved mother, a wife whose husband was now no more and whose health could not but be undermined by so many cruel misfortunes. This is how Len Burker reasoned within himself. But what could he do? Renew his former relations with Mrs. Branican, he could not. Apply to her for help through Jane, he dared not; for if discovered he was liable to arrest, and at the mercy of an extradition order, which would have been readily obtained against him. And yet, were Dolly to die, how could he prevent her fortune from slipping out of Jane's hands, that is to say out of his own?

It has not been forgotten that about seven years had elapsed between the return of the *Dolly's Hope* after her second voyage and the time when the reappearance of Harry Felton had revived the question of the *Franklin* disaster.

During this period Len Burker's existence had become more miserable than ever. From the illegal business transactions he had carried on without scruple, he had drifted to crime. Time came when a permanent home of any kind had become an impossibility for him, and Jane had to submit to the hardships of his wandering life.



SHEEP-SHEARING AT WALDECK HILL (*p.* 249).

The servant Nô had died ; but the death of this woman, whose influence had been so fatal to her husband, was no relief to Jane. She was nothing more now than the companion of a criminal, and the latter dragged her along after him through that immense country, where so many crimes remain unpunished. After the auriferous mines of Victoria had been exhausted and the thousands of diggers who then found themselves without work had departed, the country was overrun by a population whose respect for law had not been fostered or heightened by their acquaintance with placer-life.

Soon these vagrants, known in the South Australian districts under the name of "larrikins" had formed themselves into dangerous bands, scoured the country far and near, and did not leave a crime undone, whenever they were too closely pursued by the city police.

Such were the men whom Len Burker made his companions, when his notoriety expelled him from the larger towns. Then as he moved further toward those districts where police supervision is more difficult, he joined band after band of various nomadic ruffians, among others those terrible "bushrangers," whose rise dates from the first years of the colony, and whose race has never been exterminated.

To this low degree in the social ladder Len Burker had fallen ! During these last years to what extent he took part in the pillaging of farms, in highway robberies, in all the crimes that human justice was unable to punish, he alone could tell. Yes ! he alone ; for Jane, almost always abandoned to herself in some lone village, was not let into the secret of those abominations ; and it was quite possible that blood had been spilt by the hand of that man whom she had long ceased to esteem, but never consented to betray.

Twelve years had passed in this way when Harry Felton's

sudden return again roused public opinion. The news was spread abroad by the newspapers, those of Australia in particular. Len Burker learned it while reading a copy of the Sydney *Morning Herald*, in a little village in Queensland, where he was hiding after a bout at robbery and incendiarism, which, thanks to the timely intervention of the police, had not precisely turned out to the advantage of the bushrangers.

At the same time as he heard about Harry Felton, Burker saw that Mrs. Branican had left San Diego on her way to Sydney to obtain information from the mate of the *Franklin*. Just then, too, the rumor came that Felton had died after giving a few directions concerning Captain John. Then again, some time after, Len Burker was informed that Mrs. Branican had just landed at Adelaide, with the view of organizing an expedition, which she would accompany herself, and which would visit the central and northwest deserts of Australia.

When Jane heard of her cousin's arrival on Australian soil, her first thought was that of running away and seeking protection from her. But before the threats of Len Burker, who guessed her intentions, she did not dare put her project into execution.

It was then that the wretch resolved to turn events to his profit without any delay. The time had come. To meet Mrs. Branican on her way, to win her good graces with his cunning hypocrisy, and get her to take him with her across the wilds of Australia, nothing was easier, and above all, more likely to serve his purpose. Indeed, it was hardly probable that Captain John, admitting that he was still alive, could be found with these wandering natives, and it was quite possible that Dolly might succumb in the course of this dangerous expedition. All her fortune would then fall to Jane, her only relative. Who knows? The tide of human things sometimes proves remarkably

lucky, when one has the talent or the cunning to make it turn!

Of course Burker took good care not to acquaint Jane with his new plan. He parted company with the bush-rangers,—he could always rely on them should he require a helping hand later on,—left Queensland, and came to Lady Charlotte station, which was but a hundred miles distant, and by which the caravan would of necessity pass on its way to Alice Spring. That is why, for the past three weeks, Len Burker had been at the run of Waldeck Hill, where he acted as foreman. It was there he was awaiting Dolly, fully determined to allow no crime to stand between him and the fortune he coveted.

On her arrival at Lady Charlotte, Jane, as we said, suspected nothing. We can then imagine her emotion, the irresistible, instinctive impulse to which she gave way, when she suddenly found herself in Mrs. Branican's presence.

This outburst of feeling served Burker's end too well for him to dream of interfering.

The wretched fellow was now forty-five years of age. He had aged but little; his frame was still, as of old, straight and full of vigor, and still as of old too, his eye had that false, ever-flinching under-gaze, his features were stamped with that same lack of truth, which inspired everyone with distrust. As to Jane, she looked ten years older than she really was; her features were withered, her hair had grown gray around her temples, her body seemed crushed down under the weight of her troubles. Yet her eye, whose light was deadened by sorrow, brightened up again when she perceived Dolly.

After the first moment of emotion, Mrs. Branican led Jane into one of the rooms put at her disposal by the squatter. There the two women could give vent to their feelings in quietness. Dolly remembered nothing but the care bestowed on her by Jane at Prospect House. She

had nothing to reproach her with and she was ready to forgive her husband, if he would but leave Jane with her.

Their conversation lasted for a considerable time ; still Jane only related concerning the past what she could reveal without compromising her husband, and Mrs. Branican thoughtfully refrained from urging her on this subject. She felt how much the poor creature had suffered and was still suffering. Was not this, in her mind, enough to make Jane worthy of her pity, of all her affection? Captain John's situation, her unshaken conviction that she would soon find him again, the efforts she would use to succeed, this is what she spoke about principally—not forgetting the child she had lost—poor little Wat. And as she dwelt on his memory, ever present in her mind, Jane became so pale, her face underwent such a change that Dolly thought the unfortunate woman would fall in a swoon.

Jane, however, recovered her self-possession, and she needs had to go over the events of her life from the fatal day on which her cousin had become insane up to the time when Len Burker had obliged her to leave San Diego.

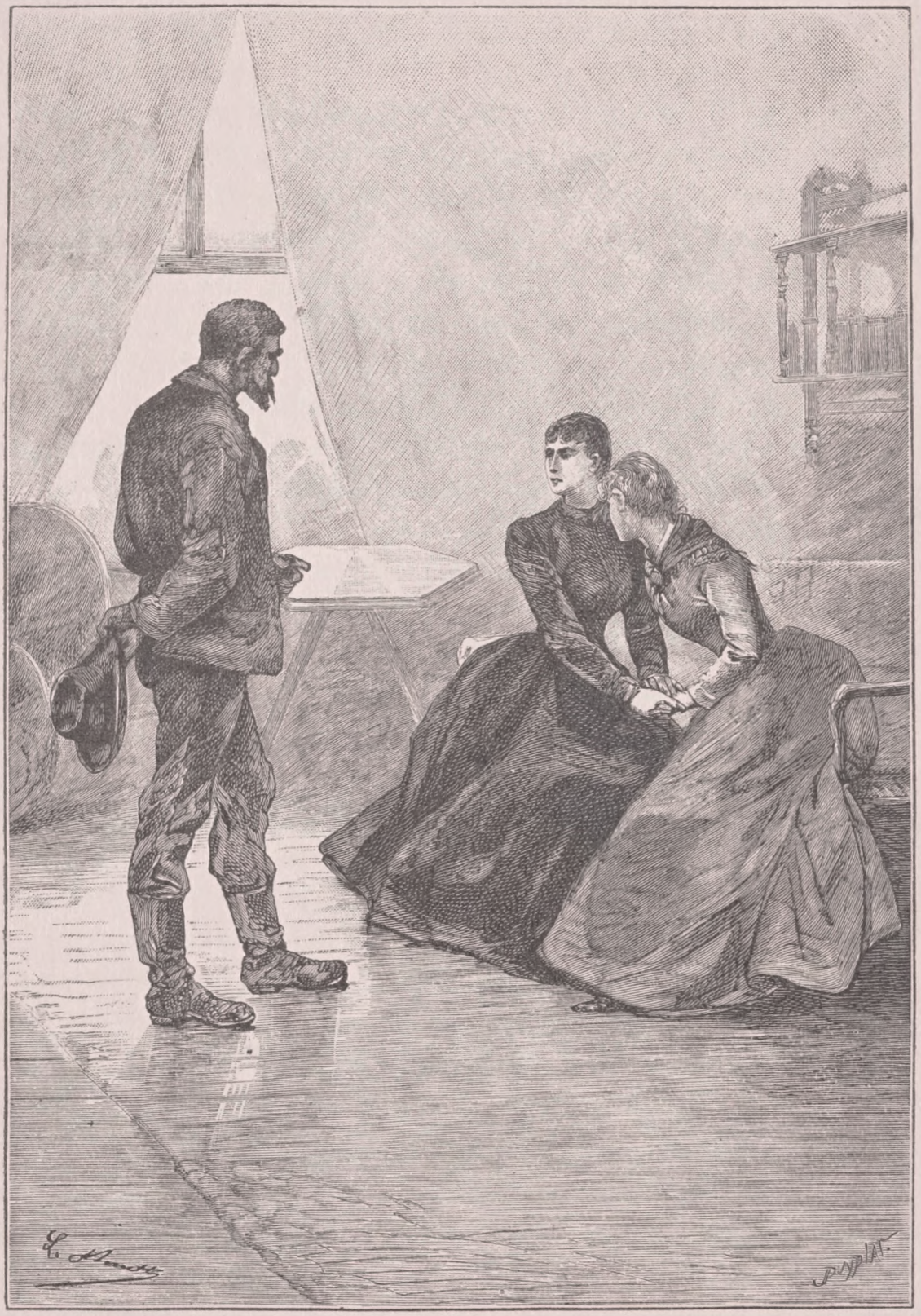
"Is it possible, my poor Jane," Dolly would say, "is it possible that during those fourteen months that you nursed me, no gleam of light ever passed through my brain? Is it possible I had no recollection of my poor John? Did I never utter his name—or that of our dear little Wat?"

"Never, Dolly, never!" murmured Jane, who could not hold back her tears.

"And you, Jane, you, dear, in whose veins the same blood runs as in mine, you could not penetrate deeper into my soul? You did not notice in my words or in my looks that I had any consciousness of the past?"

"No, Dolly!"

"Well then, Jane, I am going to tell you what I have never told anyone. Yes—when I recovered my reason—



"LEAVE HER WITH ME" (*p.* 257).

Yes—I had the presentiment that John was alive, that I was not a widow—and it also seemed to me that——

"What?" asked Jane, and she awaited Dolly's answer with eyes agazed and a look of inexplicable terror in her face.

"Yes, Jane," continued Dolly, "I had a presentiment that I was still a mother!"

Jane stood up, waving her hands before her, as though trying to drive away some horrible vision; her lips moved without uttering a word. Dolly, wholly absorbed in her own thought, did not remark her agitation, and Jane had overcome her excitement when her husband appeared at the door of the room.

Len Burker stood on the threshold, darting glances at his wife which seemed to ask:

"What have you been telling?"

Jane fell back, morally, physically overpowered by Len Burker's scowl.

Mrs. Branican understood it all. The sight of this man brought back the past to her, with the remembrance of what Jane had suffered through him. But whatever harsh words she might have spoken died on her lips: she was determined to sacrifice her grievances and lay aside her aversion, so as not to be separated again from Jane.

"Len Burker," said she, "you know what has brought me to Australia. It is a duty to which I will devote myself until the day I see John again; for he is alive. Since chance has put you in my path, since I have found Jane again, the only relative I possess, leave her with me and allow her to accompany me, according to her wish."

Burker made no answer at first. Knowing as he did the little sympathy Dolly felt for him, he wanted her to supplement her request with a proposal that he, too, should join the expedition; but as she remained silent, he thought it best to broach the matter himself.

"Dolly," said he, "I will answer your proposal straight, and I may add that I expected it. I have no objection to my wife remaining with you. Ah! we have had a hard life of it, both of us, since my bad luck compelled me to leave San Diego! We have had a deal of hardship during the past fourteen years; and you see yourself fortune has not favored me much in Australia, either, since the most I can do is earning my bread from hand to mouth. When the shearing is over, here at the run, I will be without work again; and at the same time it would grieve me to be away from Jane; so I'll ask you to let me join your party too. I know the natives up country; I have had some dealings with them, and I will be of use to you. I am sure you understand, Dolly, how happy I would be to join my efforts to yours and those of your companions to rescue John Branican."

One thing Dolly did understand was that this was an essential condition to Burker's consent. There was no arguing with such a man. Besides, if he could be trusted, he might really prove of some use, seeing that for a number of years his wanderings had led him through the central districts of the continent. So she simply said, in a rather cold tone:

"Very well, Burker, come with us; and please get ready at once, as we leave Lady Charlotte at the first hour tomorrow."

"I will be ready," answered Burker, as he left the room, not daring to hold out his hand to Mrs. Branican.

When Zach Fren heard that Len Burker was to join the party a frown of displeasure almost betrayed his views of the matter. He knew the fellow; he had learnt through Mr. Andrew how he had taken advantage of his position to squander Mrs. Branican's fortune; he was not ignorant, either, of the manner in which the faithless trustee, the fraudulent broker, had left San Diego, and he guessed that his life dur-

ing these fourteen years in Australia could hardly be above suspicion.

However, he thought it would not be a bad thing that Jane should be with Mrs. Branican and he said nothing. But he registered an oath, within himself, that he would keep his weather eye on that Burker !

The day passed without further incident. Len Burker, who was not seen again, was making his preparations, chief among which was the settlement of his account with the squatter. This, however, gave rise to no unpleasantness, his employer even offering to procure him a horse, so as to enable him to follow the caravan as far as Alice Spring.

Dolly and Jane remained together indoors the whole afternoon and evening. The former avoided speaking about Burker or even alluding to what he had done since his departure from San Diego, feeling sure that there were things Jane would fain not divulge.

During the evening neither Tom Marix nor Godfrey came to the run, both being detailed to procure information from the native villages in the neighborhood.

It was only the next morning that Dolly had the opportunity to introduce Godfrey to Jane as her adopted son.

Jane, too, was struck with the young apprentice's likeness to Captain John. So deeply impressed was she, indeed, that she scarce dared look at him in the face ; but who can tell what she experienced when Dolly told her all she knew about the lad, how she had met him on board the *Brisbane*, how he was an orphan, picked up in the streets of San Diego, how he had been brought up at Wat House, how he was about fourteen years of age.

With haggard eyes, her heart almost pulseless with anguish, she listened, dumb and motionless.

Chance would have it that Dolly was just then called out of the room. The affrighted woman was no sooner

left by herself than a cry, a shriek, broke forth from her choking breast.

"Him! him! with her. It is God that willed it!"

The next moment she had left the house and was running to the hut which served them as a dwelling, to relate all to her husband.

Len was there, packing into a trunk the few articles of dress that he was going to take away with him. The bewildered appearance of his wife startled him.

"What's up now?" he growled. "Can't you talk? What's up, I say?"

"He is alive!" exclaimed Jane. "He is here with his mother!"

"He is with his mother! alive!" repeated Burker, thunderstruck at the news.

He had but too readily understood who this "he" could refer to.

And his wife, as if dazed by the sudden shock she had received, went on murmuring incoherently: "He—their child—Dolly's second child!"

An event had taken place at Prospect House, fifteen years before, which a few words will explain.

Shortly after their moving to the chalet, Mrs. Burker and her worthy consort had noticed that poor demented Dolly was in a condition of which she, obviously, had no consciousness. Closely watched by Nô, and in spite of Jane's entreaties, the invalid was from that day placed under lock and key, and visitors were denied admittance on the plea of her weak state of mind. Seven months later, and while her mental powers were still paralyzed, a second child was born to her.

At this time, when Captain John's death was admitted by all, the birth of this child came very inopportunely to upset Burker's plans with regard to Dolly's fortune. He

had accordingly made up his mind to keep the event secret; and it was with a view to this that, several months before, he had so unaccountably dismissed all the servants but Nô. The child was but a few hours old when the wretched negro woman left him in a dark corner on the public street. Providentially a passer-by noticed him and brought him to the hospital. Thence he was sent, later on, to Wat House; and out of Wat House, as we know, he had gone to sea at the age of eight.

No need, now, to wonder at Godfrey's resemblance to Captain John, his father, or at that instinctive love felt for him by Dolly, his mother unknown to herself.

"Yes, Len," cried Jane once more, "it is he! It is her child! we must tell her all!"

But at the mere suggestion of a confession, which would have jeopardized all his plans for the future, Len Burker's clenched hand was raised over his wife's head, and a volley of curses escaped from his lips. Then clutching her arm, and staring her in the two eyes, he hissed rather than said:

"In Dolly's interest, as well as in Godfrey's, I should advise you to keep your tongue very quiet, Jane!"

CHAPTER VII.

GOING NORTHWARD.

THERE was no mistake possible; Godfrey was John and Dolly Branican's second child. It was to maternal instinct that Dolly's affection for him was due. But she did not know that the young apprentice was her son; and how would she ever know, since Jane, frightened by Len Burker's threats, was obliged to keep silent for Godfrey's

own sake? Opening her lips was putting the lad at Burker's mercy, and the villain who had already abandoned him once would soon find means of getting rid of him during this perilous journey. The mother and son would continue therefore in ignorance of the tie which bound them to one another.

As to Burker, when he saw Godfrey, when he considered the incidents relative to his birth and noted his striking likeness to John, he felt no doubt as to his identity. So then, at the very time when he looked upon John Branican's loss as certain, here he was suddenly confronted with the existence of his second son. Well then! woe to him if Jane ever thought of speaking out! But Len Burker was easy in his mind; Jane would say nothing.

On October 11, the caravan set out again, after a rest of twenty-four hours. Jane had been given a seat in Mrs. Branican's buggy. Len Burker, astride a fairly good horse, came and went, sometimes ahead, sometimes in the rear, taking pleasure in talking with Tom Marix about the territories he had already traveled over, along the telegraph route. Zach Fren's company was not so genial to him, for the sailor showed an unmistakable dislike for him. And again he avoided meeting Godfrey, whose eye his own did not dare to encounter. Whenever the lad joined in conversation with Jane and Dolly, Burker would drop to the rear, so as not to be near him.

As the caravan advanced farther into the interior, the country gradually assumed a different aspect. Here and there a few farms for the rearing of sheep, immense plains stretching out as far as the eye could reach, small groves of gum-trees or eucalypti, scattered few and far between and bearing no resemblance to the forests of South Australia.

At six o'clock on the morning of October 12, after a long journey that the heat had rendered very tiring, Tom Marix ordered a halt on the bank of the Finke River, not far from

Mount Daniel, the peak of which could be seen to the west. Geographers of the present day have agreed to consider this River Finke—called Larra-Larra by the natives—as the principal stream of central Australia. During the evening Marix drew Mrs. Branican's attention on this subject, while Zach Fren, Len and Jane Burker, and himself were keeping her company under one of the tents.

"It was of importance," said Tom, "to find out whether Finke River flowed into the immense Eyre Lake that we passed on the other side of Farina Town. Now, it is precisely in settling this question that the explorer David Lindsay employed the latter end of the year 1885. After reaching Peak Station, that we passed by, he followed the river until it disappeared under the sand to the northeast of Dalhousie. But he had reasons to believe that during the great waterfall of the rainy season its waters flow as far as Lake Eyre."

"And about what length is the Finke River?" asked Mrs. Branican.

"Not less than nine hundred miles," answered Marix.

"Are we to follow it for long?"

"A few days only, as it forms a number of bends, and at last turns up westward toward the James Ranges."

"Why, I was acquainted with that David Lindsay that you speak of!" interrupted Burker.

"You knew him?" repeated Zach Fren in an incredulous tone.

"And what is there wonderful about that?" answered the other. "I met Lindsay at the time he reached Dalhousie Station. He was on his way to the western border of Queensland, which I was then visiting on behalf of a Brisbane firm."

"True," added Marix, "that is the itinerary he followed. Then having reached Alice Spring and rounded the foot of the MacDonnell Ranges, he made a somewhat detailed

survey of Herbert River, and then pushed on to the Gulf of Carpentaria, where he ended his second campaign across the Australian continent."

"I may add," said Len Burker, "that David Lindsay was accompanied by a German botanist named Dietrich; and in their travels they used none but camels as beasts of burden. I suppose you intend doing the same when you reach Alice Spring, Dolly; and I feel certain you will succeed as David Lindsay did."

"Yes, we will succeed, Len!" said Mrs. Branican.

"Nobody ever had a doubt about that!" added Zach Fren.

After all, it seemed true that Len Burker had met David Lindsay in the way he had just explained, a fact that Jane confirmed, besides. But, had Dolly inquired the name of the Brisbane firm for which he was then traveling, this question might have slightly embarrassed him, perhaps.

During the few hours Mrs. Branican and her companions spent on the banks of the Finke River, they heard indirectly of the Englishman Jos Merritt, and Gin-Ghi his Chinese servant. Both of them were still a dozen stages ahead of the caravan; but the latter was visibly gaining on them and following the same route.

It was through the natives that information was obtained of the famous hat collector. Three days previously Jos Merritt and his companion had put up at the village of Kilna, a mile from the station.

Kilna contains several hundred blacks,—men, women and children,—who live in shapeless huts made of bark. These huts are called "villums" in the Australian language, and the resemblance of this native word with the vocables *ville* and *village*, of Latin origin, is not unworthy of notice as a philological coincidence.

Some of these aborigines are remarkable types of hu-

A Halt on the Bank of the River (*p.* 262).

manity, of high stature, well proportioned, muscular, and active, of an iron temperament. Most of them present that depressed facial angle peculiar to savage races; they are beetle-browed, their hair is curly if not wooly, their forehead narrow and retreating, their nose wide and flattened; the formidable teeth of their enormous mouth recall those of the beasts of the forests. The large abdomen and thin lower extremities are not found in the particular specimens we speak of.

Whence did the natives of this fifth part of the world originally come from? Was there once, as learned men—too learned, perhaps—have advanced, a Pacific continent, the loftiest peaks of which are all that now remain in the shape of the islands scattered over the surface of this wide basin? Are the Australians the descendants of the numerous races with which this continent was inhabited at a very remote period? Such theories are probably fated never to leave the domain of hypothesis. Should this explanation be true, on the other hand, we should conclude that the race has wonderfully degenerated both physically and morally.

The Australian has remained a wild man in habits and tastes; and with his inveterate cravings for cannibalism,—at least among certain tribes,—he is at the lowest step of the human ladder, almost on a level with carnivorous animals. In a country where there are no lions, tigers, or panthers, it may be said that he is their substitute as a man-eater. He does not till the ungrateful soil, has no clothing but a rag, lacks the most common household utensils, and has none but the most rudimentary weapons—the stone-tipped lance, the "nolla-nolla," a kind of very hard wooden club, and the famous boomerang, the helicoid shape of which causes it to travel back to him who has hurled it through the air. The Australian black is indeed a savage in every sense of the word.

To such beings nature has given a suitable consort, the "lubra," endowed with such a constitution as enables her to withstand the fatigues of nomadic life, undergo the most arduous labors, and among others carry on her back the young children and the camping material. These wretched creatures are old at twenty-five,—not old only but repulsive-looking,—and are forever chewing the leaves of the "pituri," which stimulates them during their endless tramps and sometimes enables them to do without food for a considerable time.

Will it be believed? Such of these women as have commercial intercourse with the European settlers are beginning to adopt European fashions! Yes, they must have dresses, and trains to these dresses! They must have hats, and feathers in those hats! The men themselves are far from indifferent in the selection of their own hats, and will turn a whole stock topsy-turvy to satisfy their taste.

No doubt Jos Merritt had heard of Carl Lumholtz's remarkable journey in Australia and his six months' stay among the terrible cannibals of the northeast; and how could he have failed to be impressed by the following passage in the bold Norwegian's account:

"Half-way I met the two natives. . . . . They had beautified themselves to a degree; one gloried in a shirt, the other in a woman's hat. Such articles of dress are highly prized by the Australian blacks, and go from one tribe to another, from the most civilized, who live in close proximity with the settlers, to those who never have any dealings with the whites. Several of my men (natives) borrowed this particular hat, and were proud to wear it one after the other. One of them, who walked immediately in front of me, *in puris naturalibus*, toiling and moiling under the weight of my gun, was really a ludicrous sight with this woman's hat laid away on his head. What a series of adventures the poor old headgear must have gone through in

its long journeying from the land of the white man to the mountain homes of the savages ! "

Jos Merritt knew all that, and perhaps it would be with some Australian tribe, on the head of a chief of the northern or northwestern territories, that he would come across that not-to-be-found hat, which had already brought him, at the risk of his life, among the savages of the Australian continent. A remarkable feature of the case was that not only he had not found it among the natives of Queensland, but he seemed to have been just as unsuccessful with the population of Kilna, for he had set off again and was continuing his adventurous pilgrimage toward the central deserts.

On October 13, Tom Marix gave the order to start at daybreak. The caravan took its usual marching order. It gave Dolly great satisfaction to have Jane with her, and a great consolation to Jane to be near Mrs. Branican.

The privacy of their buggy enabled them to exchange many a confidence in perfect security. Why dared not Jane go one step farther and reveal everything she knew ? Why were her lips sealed ? Now and again, on seeing the requitted love of the mother and the son, that betrayed itself every moment by a look, a gesture, or a word, between Dolly and Godfrey, she thought her secret would burst out. But Len Burker's threats would come back to her mind, and for very fear of losing the lad she even affected a kind of indifference toward him that his mother by adoption noticed, not without pain.

What she must have felt can easily be imagined when, one day, Dolly said :

" You ought to understand, Jane, how with that resemblance, that had struck me so forcibly, with the instincts that I felt within me, I was led to believe that my child had escaped death; that neither Mr. Andrew nor anybody knew anything about it ; and, from that, to believe that

Godfrey was our son. But no! Poor little Wat is now lying in the cemetery at San Diego!"

"Yes! it is there we brought him, Dolly dear. His grave is over there—among the flowers!"

"Jane! Jane!" cried Dolly; "since God has not given me back my child, let him restore his father to me! let him give me back John!"

At six o'clock on the evening of October 15, after leaving Mount Humphries in the rear, the caravan reached Palmer Creek, one of the tributaries of Finke River. This creek was almost dry, its only supply, like that of most rios in these parts, being rain water. Crossing it was then an easy matter, as it was three days later at Huges Creek, thirty-four miles farther north.

In this direction they continued to have the advantage of the Overland telegraph wires—those threads of Ariadne—which they had only to follow from station to station. Now and again clusters of houses were met with, and less frequently farms, at which fresh meat could be obtained by Marix, though at a high price. Godfrey and Zach Fren, meanwhile, looked after information, and the squatters willingly told all they knew of the wandering tribes in their neighborhood. Had they heard of a white man, a prisoner in the hands of the Indas, in the north or west? Did they know whether travelers had recently made their way into these remote parts? Not a word! No indication could they give, however vague, that could put them on Captain John's track. All the greater necessity, therefore, to push on toward Alice Spring, still eighty miles distant at least.

Beyond Huges Creek progress became more laborious, and the daily average they had hitherto reached lowered considerably. The country was very hilly. A series of narrow passes, intersected by ravines, which were barely practicable, meandered through the ramifications of the Water House Ranges. Ahead of the party, Tom Marix

PROGRESS BECAME MORE LABORIOUS (*p.* 268).

and Godfrey sought to pick out the easiest tracks. The pedestrians and horsemen had no trouble to follow them; the buggies, too, were drawn along with comparative ease, but the oxen were barely able to drag the heavily laden wagons along, in spite of all their toiling. The main point was to avoid accidents, such as the breaking of a wheel or an axle, which would have necessitated a long delay, or even compelled them to abandon the vehicle.

It was on the morning of October 19 that the caravan had entered those territories where the telegraph wires could no longer maintain a rectilineal direction; and Tom Marix, obliged thereto by the nature of the ground, had altered his course westward.

At intervals, thanks to the vicinity of the mountains, the country was wooded once more. Not unfrequently the road was intercepted with "brigalow scrubs," impenetrable thickets where acacias predominate.

On the banks of the streams stood clumps of casuarinas, as leafless as if the blast of winter had withered their branches. At the entrance of the gorges there grew some of those calabash trees, with bulged out trunks, which the Australians have named on that account "bottle-trees." After the fashion of the eucalyptus, the roots of which pump up all the water of a well, the calabash tree sucks in all the moisture of the soil, and its spongy wood is so saturated with it that the starch it contains is fit food for cattle.

These brigalow scrubs harbored a pretty large number of marsupials, among others "wallabies," such swift racers that in most cases when the natives wish to catch them they must needs circumvent them in a ring of flames by setting fire to the grass.

In certain places there were swarms of kangaroo-rats, and of those giant kangaroos which white men hunt only for the sake of sport, for no one but a black—nay, an

Australian black—would eat their leathery flesh. Once or twice Tom Marix and Godfrey succeeded in lodging a bullet in two or three couples of them, swift though they be like a horse in full gallop ; and all acknowledged that, if roast kangaroo be a matter of individual taste, kangaroo-tail soup is a dish for a king.

This particular night was marked by an incident. The camp was suddenly invaded by a horde of rats—such rats as are only seen in Australia at the time of the year when the genus "rat" migrates. Sleeping would have exposed one to being literally devoured, and accordingly all thought of sleep was deferred to the next favorable opportunity. Morning came ; the rat-infested spot was left behind, and by sunset the last ramifications of the MacDonnell Ranges were reached. The next forty miles, to Alice Spring station, would be covered under much more favorable conditions.

Far as the eye could reach, nothing but a vast plain, a little undulating here, a few groves of trees there, barely relieving its monotony. The road lay once more in the same direction as the telegraph line, and the wagons had but little difficulty in rumbling along the track by the side of the posts.

It was almost incredible, by the way, that this unprotected line over a desert country should not be tampered with by the natives.

"I have told you already," Tom Marix would say, whenever this subject was alluded to, "ever since the punishment the engineer gave them, the Indians have an idea that thunder runs along the wires, and they would not dream of touching them. Some of them have even got it into their heads that one end of the wires is fastened to the sun and the other to the moon, and that those two big balls would fall down on them if ever they lay hands on the poles."

As usual, the first stage ended at eleven o'clock. The

halt was made near a eucalyptus grove, the foliage of which, drooping down like the crystal pendants of a chandelier, gave little or no shade. Close by flowed a creek, or rather a tiny streak of water, barely sufficient to wet the stones of its bed. On the opposite bank, a remarkable slip must have taken place many a long year ago, and a steep acclivity stood like a wall from east to west for a distance of several miles. Away to the rear could still be descried the distant profile of the MacDonnell Ranges above the horizon.

The midday halt usually lasted till two o'clock, thus securing rest for the wayfarers during the warmest part of the day. In truth it was merely a siesta, not a camping. Tom Marix did not even get the oxen unyoked or the trappings taken off the horses; they ate just as they were. The tents were not pitched nor were any fires lit. The cold meat and preserves sufficed for this second meal, which had been preceded by a substantial breakfast at early morning.

Each one then as usual sat, or lay at full length, on the grass. Half an hour later the drivers and the men composing the escort, white and black, were fast asleep, after satisfying their hunger, and would sleep on until the signal for starting should be given.

Mrs. Branican, Jane, and Godfrey formed a separate group. The servant Harriet had brought them a basket containing some provisions, and while eating they naturally spoke of their approaching arrival at Alice Spring. That hopefulness that had never left Dolly was entirely shared by the young apprentice, and even though there would be no hope left, nothing could have shaken their conviction. All, indeed, were full of faith in the ultimate success of the undertaking, and positively determined not to leave Australia so long as Captain John's fate had not been ascertained.

Needless to say that Len Burker, affecting to be animated with the same sentiments, was not sparing of his encourage-

ments when the opportunity presented itself. The above determination on the part of the rescuers suited his views admirably, for it was to his interest that Mrs. Branican should not leave Australia since he himself could not return to America. Dolly, who suspected nought of these odious schemes, was thankful to him for his support.

During this halt Zach Fren and Tom Marix were planning the changes that would have to be made before leaving the station at Alice Spring. Was it not then that the real difficulties of their journey would begin?

It was about half-past one, when a strange dull sound was heard away to the north; a kind of prolonged, tumultuous commotion, a continued rumbling, which re-echoed from afar off to their very ears.

Mrs. Branican, Jane, and Godfrey had stood up, and were listening attentively.

Tom Marix and Fren had joined them in an instant and strained their ears to discover the cause of the disturbance.

"Where can that noise come from?" asked Dolly.

"A storm, very likely," said the sailor.

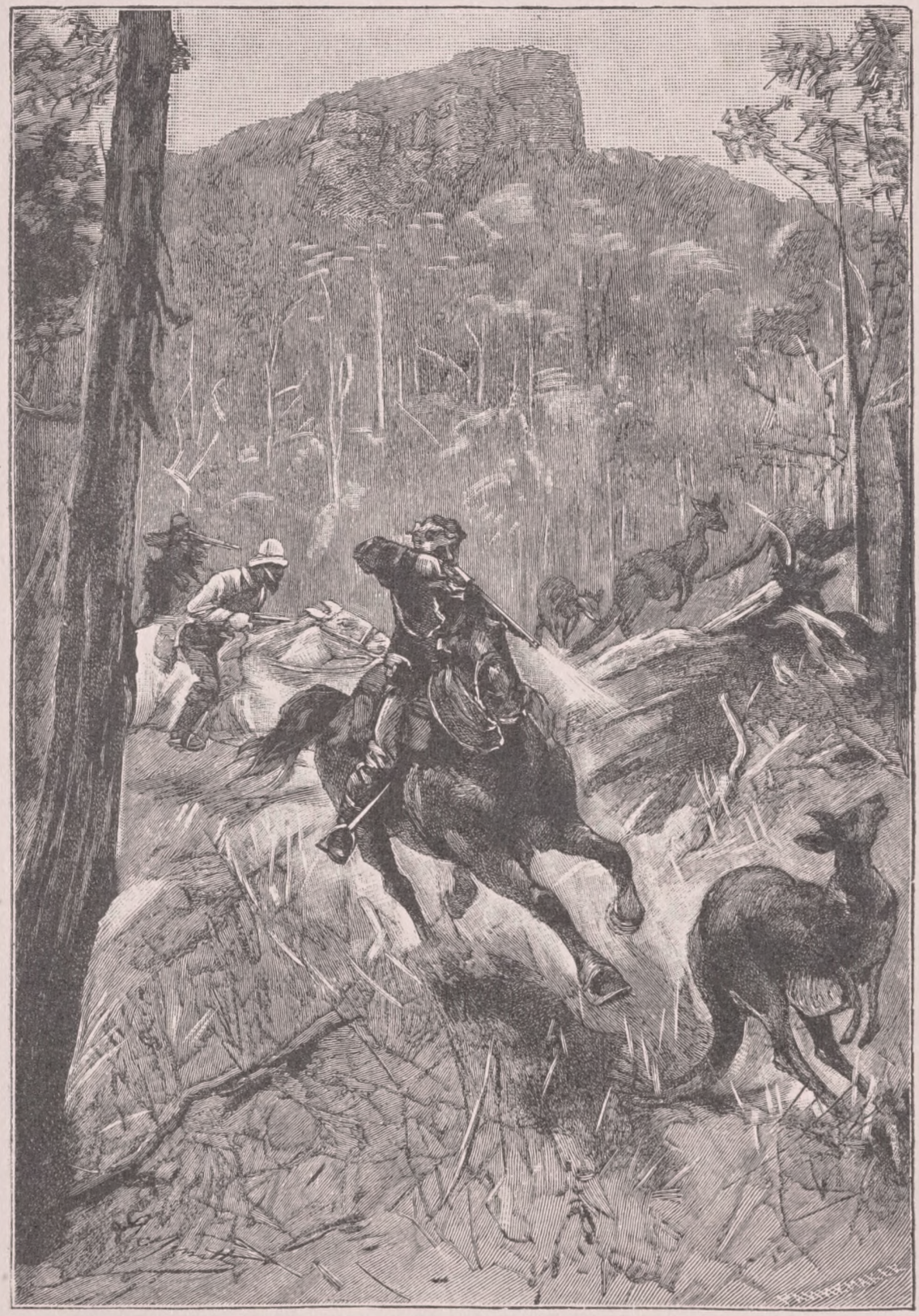
"It seems more like the dashing of waves against the beach," observed Godfrey.

Still there were no symptoms of a storm, and no sign of electricity in the air. As to the noise of water overflooding the country, it could only be produced by a sudden rise of the creeks. But when Zach Fren put this forward as a solution of the mystery, Tom Marix scouted the idea.

"An inundation in this part of the continent, at this time of year and after such dry weather? That can't be, friend!" he said.

And he was right.

After a violent storm, an overflow may be caused by the superabundance of rain-water; and the lowlands in the immediate neighborhood may be inundated during the bad season. But at the end of October this surmise was inadmissible.



KANGAROO HUNTING (*p.* 270).

Tom Marix, Zach Fren, and Godfrey, after hoisting themselves to the ledge of the steep bank, near which they had halted, cast anxious glances toward the north and east.

Nothing could be seen over the vast tract of gloomy desert plains. Above the horizon, however, was a curiously shaped cloud, which could not be confounded with the hazy nebula that heat accumulates on the peripheric line of the earth and the sky. It was not a collection of misty vapors, but rather such an agglomeration of well-outlined whirls as are produced by discharges of artillery. As to the noise proceeding from behind that huge curtain of dust,—it could be nothing else but dust,—it was getting louder and louder, and now resembled the rhythmical cadence of numberless feet; the mighty gallop of some giant flock reverberated by the elastic soil of the immense prairie.

Whence did it come?

"I know what it is! I have seen this already," cried Marix. "They are sheep!"

"Sheep?" answered Godfrey, with a laugh. "If it's only sheep——"

"Don't you laugh, Godfrey!" said Tom. "There may be thousands and thousands of them, no doubt seized with some unaccountable panic; and if it be as I say, they will come along like an avalanche and destroy everything in their way!"

Tom Marix was not exaggerating. When these animals get frightened through some cause or another,—a thing which sometimes happens within the runs,—nothing can hold them back; they break down the fences around them and rush madly away. There is an old saying that "before a flock of sheep the king's own coach must pull up," and in truth a herd of these stupid things will let themselves be crushed to death rather than give way; but if they allow

themselves to be crushed at times, they in their turn crush all before them when they sweep along in large masses.

This was precisely the case.

Judging by this cloud of dust rolling over a distance of six or eight miles, there could not be less than a hundred thousand of these panic-stricken sheep making straight for the halting place of the little caravan. They formed a huge line from north to south; and on they came like a colossal bore over the plain; nor would they stop until they fell, exhausted by their wild career.

"What is to be done?" asked Fren.

"We must shelter ourselves as well as we can against the foot of this rock," answered the leader.

There was no other course open, and the three made their way down at once. Insufficient as was the shelter suggested by Tom Marix, all hastened to avail themselves of it. The avalanche of sheep was now but two miles from the camp. The monster cloud rose high against the sky, and out of it came a very storm of formidable bleatings.

The wagons were drawn close to the steep rampart that nature had providentially prepared for them; the horses and oxen were made to lie down, the better to withstand the ordeal if the terrible wave did not pass over them without touching them. As to the men, they crouched against the foot of the rock. Godfrey stationed himself near Dolly, the better to protect her; and they awaited events.

Marix, however, would climb the rock again, and have another look at the sheep-covered plain. The noisy herd was still drawing nearer and stretched over one-third of the horizon. As Marix had said, there could not be fewer than a hundred thousand. In less than two minutes they would be close at hand.

"Look out!" shouted Tom, as he glided down to the spot where Mrs. Branican, Jane, Godfrey, and Fren were huddled together.

Almost at the same moment the front line of the sheep appeared on the crest above. They did not stop—they could not have done so; down they leaped, and in an instant hundreds were piled up in a helpless heap, which broke the fall of those who rushed after them into space. To their agonizing cries were now mingled the neighing of the horses and the roars of the bulls, almost maddened with terror. All round was darkness and confusion, while overhead the irresistible wave still rolled on—a veritable torrent of living animals.

This lasted five minutes; the first to rise to their feet, Tom Marix, Godfrey, and Zach Fren saw the bejumbled cloud fleeting away toward the south.

"Get up! it's all over!" cried the leader.

They were but too glad to obey. A few bruises and some trifling damage to the wagons was the full extent of the harm sustained by the party, thanks to the shelter of the rock.

Marix and his two companions again ascended to its summit.

Yonder to the south the herd was fast disappearing. To the north lay the plain, plowed and torn and devastated.

"Say!" suddenly cried Godfrey. "Look over there—there!"

About fifty paces away, two bodies lay on the ground—two natives, no doubt carried along, thrown down, and probably trampled over by the sheep.

Tom Marix and Godfrey ran over to them.

What was their surprise on seeing Jos Merritt and his faithful Gin-Ghi, motionless, and apparently lifeless.

They were far from dead, however, and thanks to the efficient care bestowed upon them they quickly recovered from the severe shock; and no sooner had they opened their eyes when both jumped to their feet.

"Right! That's quite right!" observed Jos Merritt.

Then turning around he asked :

" Where is Gin-Ghi ? "

" Gin-Ghi is here, or at least what is left of him ! " replied the Chinaman, rubbing his hips. " Truly, Master Jos, that was too many sheep, a thousand times, ten thousand times too many sheep ! "

" Could never be too many legs of mutton or too many chops, Gin-Ghi ; so, then, how could there be too many sheep ! " replied the Englishman. " It is a pity, though, that we were not able to catch a single one of them as they passed over us."

" Don't you fret about that, Mr. Merritt," suggested Zach Fren. " At the foot of the rock yonder you'll find a few hundreds of them at your service."

" Right ! That's quite right ! " gravely concluded the phlegmatic personage.

Then turning to his servant, who having sufficiently rubbed his hips was now applying the same treatment to his shoulders :

" Gin-Ghi ? "

" Sir ? "

" Two chops for to-night—and under-done, mind ! "

Jos Merritt and his companion then related what had happened them. They were traveling along about three miles ahead of the caravan when they were charged by this army of sheep. Their horses had run away and they were unable to stop them. Thrown off and trodden on, it was a miracle that they were not crushed to death, and a wonderful piece of luck that Mrs. Branican and her friends had arrived just in time to save them.

And now, after escaping from this serious danger, the whole party set off again, and about six o'clock in the evening they reached the station at Alice Spring.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEYOND ALICE SPRING STATION.

THE next day, October 24, Mrs. Branican began the work of reorganizing her expedition in view of a campaign likely to be of long duration, tiring, and perilous, seeing that it would cover almost unknown parts of central Australia.

Alice Spring is one of the Overland Telegraph stations—a mere cluster of some twenty houses, scarcely deserving the name of "village."

Mrs. Branican's first care was to see the chief officer at this station, Mr. Flint. Perhaps he knew something of the Indas. Did this West Australian tribe, with whom Captain John was a prisoner, never come down as far as the central districts?

Mr. Flint could give no definite answer on this subject, except that the Indas now and again did roam to the west of Alexandra Land. He had never heard a word of John Branican. As to Harry Felton, all he knew was that he had been picked up eighty miles east of the telegraph wire, on the Queensland boundary line. According to him, the best thing to be done was to follow out the indications given by the unfortunate man before he died, namely to keep on obliquely toward the districts of Western Australia. He wished the undertaking every success, and hoped that Mrs. Branican would triumph where he, Flint, had failed, six years previously, when he had gone in search of Lerchhardt—a search which the wars of the natives among themselves had compelled him to give up. He placed himself at Mrs. Branican's disposal to furnish her with all the resources Alice Spring could command. He added he had done the same for David Lindsay when the latter called

here in 1886, before pushing toward Lake Nash and the MacDonnell Range Group.

What this part of Australia was at the time when our party was about starting on its way northwest may be thus described.

Two hundred and sixty miles from Alice Spring, on the 127th meridian, lies the boundary line from south to north, which separates South Australia, Alexandra Land, and North Australia from that province designated Western Australia, the capital of which we have already stated to be Perth. It is the largest, least known, and least populous of the seven great divisions of the continent. In reality, it is geographically determined only by the perimeter of its coasts, which include the territories of Nuyts, Lieuwin, Wlaming, Endrack, Witt, and Tasman.

Modern atlases show three distinct deserts inland of this region, the solitudes of which are only visited by wandering natives.

First. In the south the desert lying between the 30th and 28th degrees of latitude, explored by Forrest in 1869 from the coast to the 123d meridian, and entirely crossed by Giles in 1875.

Second. The Gibson Desert, lying between the 28th and 29th degree, which was also explored by Giles in the year 1876.

Third. The Great Sandy Desert, between the 23d degree and the north coast, which Colonel Warburton managed to cross from east to northwest in 1873, at the cost of the dangers that we know.

Now this was the very territory on which Mrs. Branican was about to commence operations. According to the information gleaned from Harry Felton, the itinerary chosen by Colonel Warburton was the best course to follow. That intrepid explorer had taken no less than four months to journey from Alice Spring to the Indian Ocean, say a total

of fifteen months from September, 1872, to January, 1874, for the whole of his campaign. How long would it take Mrs. Branican and her companions?

Dolly urged Zach Fren and Marix not to lose a single day, and with Mr. Flint's efficient help they did their utmost to comply with her request.

At an enormous expense thirty camels and their Afghan drivers had been brought together at the station for the past fortnight for Mrs. Branican's use.

It is but some thirty years ago, as we have already remarked, that Mr. Elder imported a certain number of these camels from India. These sober and hardy animals, far more useful than ornamental, are able to carry a load of 300 pounds and to cover forty kilometers in twenty-four hours, "at their own gait" as the saying is. Moreover, they can get on without food for a week at a time, and without drink for six days in winter and three days in summer. Well calculated are they, therefore, to render on this barren continent the same services as under the broiling sun of Africa. The hardships they undergo almost with impunity are practically the same in both. Are not the Sahara and the Great Sandy Desert crossed by corresponding meridians on their respective hemispheres?

Mrs. Branican selected twenty of her thirty camels for riding purposes, and ten to carry the baggage. The males were more numerous than the females; most of them were young but strong and healthy. Even as Tom Marix was the head of the human flock, these brutes had a leader of their own, a male camel, the oldest of the herd, which the others readily obeyed. It was he led them when on the march, and kept them together during the halts. In the event of his death the whole band might scatter, and the drivers would be unable to keep them in order. It was therefore quite natural that this precious animal should be assigned to Tom Marix, and these two leaders—one carry-

ing the other—went as might be expected, ahead of the caravan.

Of course the horses and oxen that had brought the party from Farina Town to Alice Spring were to be left in Mr. Flint's charge. On the return journey they would be found there along with the wagons and buggies, as, in all probability, the travelers would return to Adelaide by the route they had followed on coming.

Dolly and Jane were to occupy one "kibitka" together, a kind of tent almost identical with those used by the Arabs, and carried by one of the strongest camels in the troop. In this way they could protect themselves from the heat of the sun behind thick curtains, and would even be sheltered from the rain which falls in torrents when it does fall—rarely, it is true—on the central plains of this continent.

Harriet, Mrs. Branican's servant, accustomed to the long journeys of the nomads, preferred to follow on foot. In her eyes those tall cattle with the two humps seemed rather intended to carry baggage than human beings.

Three saddle-camels had been set apart respectively for Lem Burker, Godfrey and Zach Fren, who would soon get accustomed to their hard and jolting shuffle, nor would there be any reason to hasten their usual gait, since a certain number of the men would be on foot. A trot would not be expected of them except when it would be necessary to go ahead of the main corps in search of a well or a spring while crossing the Great Sandy Desert.

The remaining fifteen camels were for the white men of the escort. The blacks in charge of the bat-camels were to travel the twelve or fourteen miles constituting the two daily stages on foot, a tramp which they would not consider excessive.

Such was the reorganization of the caravan in view of the hardships of this second part of the journey. Everything had been combined, with Mrs. Branican's approba-

"LOOK OUT!" SHOUTED TOM (*p.* 274).

tion, so as to meet the requirements of a journey, however long it might be, without overtaxing either the animals or the men. Being better supplied with means of transport, provisions, and camping material, and being altogether in more favorable conditions than any of the Australian explorers had been hitherto, there was every reason to hope that the expedition would attain its aim.

And what of Jos Merritt, it may be asked? Was this gentleman going to remain at Alice Spring with his faithful Achates, Gin-Ghi? If he left it, would it be to continue his course northward along the-telegraph posts? Would he not be more likely to move east or west in search of native tribes? For, there it was, of course, that the amateur would have the greater chance of lighting upon the wonderful headgear that he had been seeking so long. But now that he had no means of conveyance, no baggage, no provisions, either, how could he proceed any farther?

Several times since they had met, Zach Fren had spoken to Gin-Ghi on the subject, but the Celestial had replied that he never knew his master's next move, for the very good reason that his master never knew it himself. The one thing certain, however, was that Jos Merritt would never consent to go back so long as his monomania had not been satisfied; and, that being so, he, Gin-Ghi, a native of Hong-Kong, could not guess when he would again see the land "where the dainty little Chinese girls, all in silk arrayed, pluck with their tender fingers the blossom of the water-lily."

Still the eve of the departure arrived and Jos Merritt had as yet said nothing of his future plans, when Gin-Ghi came to Mrs. Branican with that gentleman's compliments, to request the favor of a private interview.

Dolly, desirous of being useful, if she could, to this peculiar personage, replied that if Jos Merritt would call at Mr. Flint's house, where she was staying, she would be happy to receive him.

Jos Merritt availed himself of the offer almost immediately—it was during the afternoon of October 25—and no sooner was he seated, than he began in the following terms:

"Mrs. Branican—I have no doubt—I have not the least doubt but you will find Captain Branican. And I wish I were as sure of finding that hat, on the discovery of which all the efforts of a somewhat checkered existence have been spent. You are, of course, aware of the motive for which I have come to ransack the utmost recesses of Australia?"

"I am, Mr. Merritt," answered Dolly, "and for my part I have no doubt but that some day you will be rewarded for so much perseverance."

"Perseverance! Right! That's right! The fact is, you see, madam, this hat is unique in the world!"

"And it is wanting to your collection?"

"I regret to say it is; indeed, I regret it to such an extent that I would willingly give my head, if I only could put that hat on it!"

"Is it a man's hat?" inquired Dolly, hardly knowing how to express in words some show of interest in the harmless hobbies of this eccentric man.

"No, madam, no—a woman's hat; but what woman! You must excuse me if I keep her name and title secret for fear of—— Just think, madam, if anyone else heard——"

"You are doubtless acting on some information?"

"Well, yes—that is——From what I have been able to gather after an incredible amount of correspondence, numberless inquiries, and world-wide peregrinations, I believe that this hat has emigrated to Australia after many vicissitudes, and that from the very high, yes, a very high station it once occupied in society, it has come down to the head of the chief of some native tribe."

"But this tribe——"

"It is one of those who wander through the north and west of this continent! As to that I will visit them all if

needs be. I will search every one of them ; and as the order in which I take them is a matter of no consideration, I am here to beg leave to join your caravan in search of the Indas."

"You are welcome to do so, Mr. Merritt," answered Dolly ; "and I will give orders at once to get two extra camels."

"One, madam, will be enough for my servant and myself ; the more so as I propose to ride the animal, while Gin-Ghi will come along on foot."

"You are aware that we start to-morrow, Mr. Merritt?"

"To-morrow? Right! That's quite right! I am not the man to delay you, Mrs. Branican. But it is quite understood, is it not, that I have nothing to do with the finding of Captain John. That is your concern. As for me—my hat——"

"Yes, your hat exclusively, Mr. Merritt ; that is understood!" answered Dolly.

Thereupon Jos Merritt retired, declaring that this intelligent, energetic, and generous woman deserved to find her husband, quite as much at least as he himself deserved to find the jewel, the crowning *chef-d'œuvre* of his collection of crowns.

Gin-Ghi, being advised that he should be ready to start the next morning, began setting in order the few things that had survived the sheep disaster. As to the animal which master and servant were to share,—in the above mentioned manner,—Mr. Flint was able to get it, and received for his thanks an icy, "Right! That's quite right!"

The next day, 26th of October, Mrs. Branican took leave of the goodhearted station-master ; and the caravan set out again. Godfrey rode by the side of Marix ; after them came the mounted escort. In the kibitka were Dolly and Jane, with Len Burker riding on one side and Zach Fren on the other ; then followed Jos Merritt, majestically seated

between the two humps of his mount; and, behind, Gin-Ghi hobbled along. The remainder of the escort, leading the pack camels, brought up the rear.

At six o'clock the party, leaving the telegraph line and Alice Spring station to the west, disappeared behind one of the offshoots of the MacDonnell Ranges.

During the month of October the heat is already excessive in Australia. For that reason Marix had determined that they should travel only during the early hours of the day, from four to nine o'clock; and in the evening from four to eight. Even at night the air was stifling, and long halts became necessary to accustom the party to the fatigues in store for them.

As yet they had not reached the desert, with its boundless arid plains, its dried-up creeks, its wells which no longer contain but a little briny water when the heat has not evaporated it to the last drop. At the foot of the mountains stretched that uneven region through which are intermingled the ramifications of MacDonnell and Strangeway Ranges. The northern direction followed by the telegraph wires across these hills had to be abandoned by our travelers for a more westerly one. It was about the same route that Giles had adopted in 1872, and which intersected Sturt's itinerary twenty-five miles north of Alice Spring.

The camels ambled on but slowly. Here and there, on this undulating surface, small creeks were to be found, and the little streaks of running water among the trees were as welcome to the men as to the cattle, whose supply for several days did not fail to be renewed.

Along these oases (alas, too scarce) the sportsmen of the party detailed to supply the larder succeeded in bringing down not a few heads of game—rabbits among others.

Everybody knows that the rabbit is to Australia what the grasshopper is to Africa. These over-prolific rodents will ultimately destroy everything if they be not checked.

Hitherto our friends had rather disdained them as an article of food, real game being abundant in the forests of South Australia. It would always be time enough to fall back on this somewhat insipid eating when there would be a lack of hares, partridges, bustards, ducks, pigeons, and other like dainties. But here, by the side of the MacDonnell Ranges, people had to be content with what they found, namely, with the rabbits swarming at every turn.

One evening, October 31, while Godfrey, Jos Merritt, and Zach Fren were chatting together, the conversation turned on this unfortunate creature, whose wholesale extermination is so devoutly wished for. And Godfrey, having asked if there had always been rabbits in Australia:

"No, my lad," answered Tom Marix. "Their importation only dates back about thirty years. And a nice present we got on that occasion, I tell you! Those things have multiplied at such a rate that they are now ruining our lands. Certain parts are so overrun with them that no cattle can be reared there. The fields are riddled with rabbit holes just like so many sieves, and the grass is gnawed down to the root. It is a downright calamity; and I am beginning to think that it is not the squatters who will feed on the rabbits by and by, but the rabbits who will eat us up."

"I guess they tried strong means to get rid of them?" inquired Zach.

"Useless means, apparently, for the pest increases instead of diminishing. I know a farmer who has had to spend forty thousand pounds to clear his run of them. The government offers a premium of so much a head for them as they do in India for tigers and serpents. Bah! it's like that monster we read of in the old times; as fast as you cut off their heads, they grow on again; faster, even. Strychnine was tried once; that killed them by the hundred thousand, but it nearly poisoned the country as well. Nothing has succeeded."

"Did I not hear," asked Godfrey, "that a learned Frenchman, a Mr. Pasteur, had offered to do away with them by giving them some sort of cholera?"

"Yes, and perhaps that might have proved successful. But the first thing to do would have been to try it, and they would not let him, although a reward of twenty thousand pounds had been offered for the least suggestion. And now Queensland and New South Wales have constructed a railing eight hundred miles long, so as to protect the eastern part of the continent against being invaded by them. It is a veritable calamity!"

"Right! Quite right! A veritable calamity," interjected Jos Merritt, "just like the yellow race! In time, the yellow race will invade the five portions of the earth. The Chinese are the rabbits of the future."

Luckily Gin-Ghi was not there, or he would not have allowed this offensive comparison with regard to his countrymen to pass by without a protest; or, at least, without a shrug of his shoulders accompanied by that long noisy inhalation which, with the people of his race, does duty for a laugh.

"So then," continued Zach, "the Australians will give up the fight?"

"What can we do?" retorted Marix.

"It seems to me, however," said the Englishman, "that there would be one way of getting out of this difficulty."

"What is it?" asked Godfrey.

"Simply the passing of a bill by the British Parliament to this effect: '*From the date hereof it shall be unlawful to wear any other but the beaver hat throughout the United Kingdom and the Colonies dependent therefrom.*' Now, as beaver hats are never manufactured but with rabbit-skins—you see the consequence!"

Whether his hearers did see and appreciate the point or not, the best thing they could do, while waiting for said

parliamentary bill to be passed, was to make use of the rabbits they killed on the way. It would be so many invaders the less for Australia; and in truth no mercy was shown them.

As to the other animals, they were of no use as food, although a naturalist would have been interested in some at least of the mammifers they came across. One was the echiana, a monotrematous species, with a beak-like snout and horny lips, bristly like the hedgehog, which feeds chiefly on the insects it catches with its filiform tongue by stretching it on the ground outside its hole. The other was the ornithorhynchus, a duck-billed, low-bodied animal, about a foot in length, and covered with brown fur. The mammals of this family have this peculiarity, that they are ovoviviparous; they lay eggs, but they give suck to the young that come out of those eggs.

One day Godfrey, one of the best shots of the band, was fortunate enough to see a "iarri," but only succeeded in wounding him, and the next moment the animal had disappeared forever in the thicket. He consoled himself, however, on his ill-luck when Marix informed him that the "iarri" is not fit to be eaten, and has no other value, in the sportsman's eyes, but the difficulty of its being caught.

It would have been different with the "bungari," a tall fellow of essentially nocturnal habits, with a dark brown coat and a long tail, which winds in and out between the branches of trees like a marsupial, claws his way along the bark like a cat, and hides himself so cleverly that it is very hard to distinguish him.

His flesh, when roasted on coals, is greatly superior to that of the kangaroo, so Marix said. Unfortunately they were unable to have a taste of it; and, by and by, not bungaris alone would become scarce, as they got nearer to the desert; indeed, it was evident that the caravan would soon be thrown exclusively on its own stock of provisions.

Meanwhile, in spite of the roughness of the road, Tom Marix continued to keep up the average of twelve to fourteen miles in the twenty-four hours—a speed on which their rate of progress had been calculated. Although the heat was already intense—thirty to thirty-five degrees C. in the shade—the travelers bore it without much discomfort. During the day, it is true, small clumps of trees were still found, beneath which they could enjoy their siesta in relative comfort. And again water, though scarce, was not altogether wanting yet ; and lastly stops, regularly made from nine in the morning to four in the afternoon, seemed to sufficiently rest both men and beasts from their fatigues.

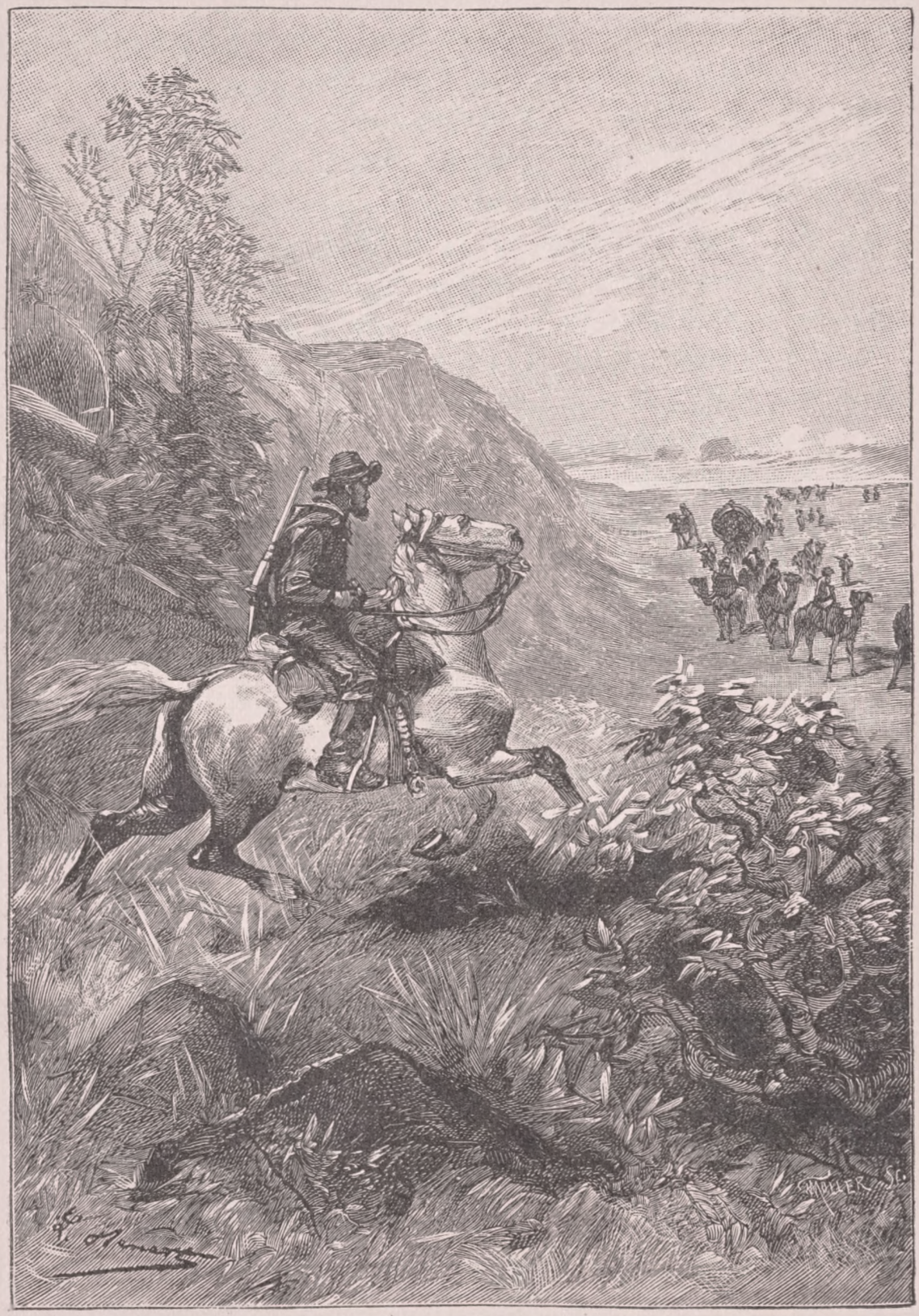
The country was uninhabited. The last of the runs had been left behind. No more paddocks or inclosures, no more sheep—they would have starved on the short dried-up grass of these parts. Scarcely did they ever meet a few natives making their way to the stations along the telegraph line.

On October 7, in the afternoon, Godfrey, who had been half a mile ahead of the caravan, signaled the apparition of a horseman. This equestrian was following a narrow path through the blocks of quartz and metamorphic rocks heaped together at the foot of the MacDonnell Range. No sooner had he perceived the caravan than he galloped his horse toward it at full speed.

The travelers had just halted under two or three moribund eucalypti which hardly gave them any shade, although their roots had sucked up almost all the water of a little creek that once flowed hard by.

Godfrey presented the stranger to Mrs. Branican, and first of all she had him treated to a large glass of whisky, a windfall for which he showed himself very thankful.

He was a white Australian, about thirty-five years of age, evidently an expert horseman, proof against the rain through constant exposure, and equally inured to the heat



HE GALLOPED TOWARD THEM (*p.* 288).

of the sun, whose rays could no longer affect his tawny skin. He was a letter carrier, and plied his trade zealously, good-humoredly; scouring the country far and wide, delivering letters and spreading news about from one station to another, as well as to the villages east and west of the telegraph line. He was then returning from Emu Spring, a post on the northern slope of the Bluff Ranges, and had crossed the whole district which stretches up to the MacDonnell group.

There was something in the letter carrier which recalled the jolly devil-may-care postilions of the olden times. What was a little twitch of hunger or thirst to him? Certain of being heartily welcomed wherever he went, even though he had no letters to deliver; determined, full of courage and strength, a revolver in his belt, his rifle slung over his shoulder and a good horse under him, he would travel day and night without fear of unpleasant encounters.

Mrs. Branican took pleasure in making him talk; in asking him questions about the different tribes he had had dealings with.

The good fellow answered them all in a simple and obliging manner. Of course, like everyone else, he had heard of the *Franklin* disaster; but he was unaware that an expedition fitted out by John Branican's wife had left Adelaide to explore the regions of central Australia. She herself then told him that, according to Harry Felton's information, it was with the Indas tribe that Captain John had been a prisoner, these nine long years.

"And in your travels," she asked, "did you never come across any natives of this tribe?"

"No, madam, I never did; although they have sometimes come very close to Alexandra Land; but of course I have heard about them."

"Perhaps you could tell us where they are just now?" asked Zach Fren.

"With those rovers it would be a hard thing to say. One season they are here, the next they are away somewhere else.

"Well, then, where were they last?" queried Mrs. Branican.

"Six months ago, lady, I believe they were away to the northwest, by the Fitz Roy River. The Tasmanian tribes are always hanging about those parts. Zounds, the thought of it! Of course, you know, ma'am, that before you get there you have to cross the whole of the central and the western deserts; and it's not for me to tell you what you're going to expose yourself to! After all, a good heart and plenty of pluck take you a mighty long way! So, I wish you a lot of it, ma'am, and good luck to you and yours!"

Another glass of whisky was offered to the brave post-rider as well as a few tins of preserves, which he stowed away in his bag, whereupon he leaped on his horse and soon disappeared behind a bend of the mountains.

Two days later Mount Liebig, the farthest peak of this chain, had been left behind, and the desert was reached, 130 miles northeast of Alice Spring.

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. BRANICAN'S DIARY.

THE word "desert" immediately brings to mind the Sahara, with its immense sandy plains, sprinkled over with its cool and green-leaved oases. The central regions of the continent of Australia, however, have nothing in common with the northern parts of Africa unless it be the scarcity of water. "The water seeks the shade" say the natives; and the traveler has to journey from wells to to wells, which are in most cases considerable distances

THE GOOD FELLOW ANSWERED IN A SIMPLE AND OBLIGING MANNER (*p.* 289).

apart from each other. Still, although the Australian soil, whether flat or hilly, is for the most part simple sand, it is not absolutely arid. Blossom-covered shrubs, now and again a few trees, gum-trees, acacias or eucalypti, all this is less distressing than the nudity of the Sahara. But these trees and bushes bear neither fruit nor leaves that can be used as food, and the caravans are obliged to carry provisions with them; as to animal life, it is only represented in this wilderness by the rare passage of a few birds.

Mrs. Branican kept a diary of her voyage with great regularity and accuracy. A few notes from this journal will reveal, more precisely than would a simple narrative, the incidents of this laborious plodding onward. They will show better also the fervor of Dolly's soul, her firmness amidst so many trials, the dogged obstinacy of her clinging to hope even when the day came when most of her companions gave way to despair by her side. Herein will be seen, in fine, what a woman is capable of when she devotes herself to the fulfillment of a duty.

October 10.—We left our camp near Mount Liebig at four o'clock this morning. Those were precious directions that we obtained from the letter-carrier. They agree with those given us by poor Felton. Yes, it is toward the northwest, and more especially along the Fitz Roy River, that we must look for the Indas. Nearly 800 miles more to travel! We will do it though! I will get there, were I to go alone, even though I fell into the hands of that tribe. Then, at least, I would be with John!

We are going in a northwesterly direction, almost following Colonel Warburton's route. Our itinerary will be much the same as his was, as far as the Fitz Roy River. May we not undergo the same trials as he did, or leave any of our number behind us, dead through fatigue! Unfortunately, our circumstances are less favorable than his

were. It was in April that Colonel Warburton left Alice Spring—a month which corresponds to October in North America, therefore toward the end of the hot season. We, on the contrary, did not leave Alice Spring until the end of October, and we are now in November, that is to say at the beginning of the Australian summer. Accordingly the heat is very great, nearly thirty-five degrees Centigrade in the shade, when there is any shade; and we can expect none save from a cloud crossing the sun, or from an occasional cluster of trees.

The division of the day planned by Tom Marix is very practical. The length and hours of the stages are equally well proportioned. The first is from four to eight o'clock in the morning, then a halt till four in the afternoon. The second is from four to eight in the evening, then rest for the remainder of the night. In this way we avoid traveling under the burning noonday sun. But what a loss of time, what delays! Admitting that we meet with no accident, we will scarcely reach the banks of the Fitz Roy in three months at this rate!

I am delighted with Tom Marix. Zach Fren and he are two men on whom I can rely under any circumstances.

Godfrey frightens me with his passionate nature. He is always ahead of us and often completely out of sight With great difficulty do I manage to keep him near me; and yet that child loves me as though he were my son. Tom Marix has spoken to him about his rashness. I hope he will take notice of it.

Len Burker is always in the rear, and seems to seek the company of the blacks more than that of our white men. He has been, this long time, acquainted with their tastes, instincts, and customs. When we meet any natives he is very useful, as he speaks their language sufficiently well to understand what they say and to make himself understood. Poor Jane, I trust her husband may have changed for the

better, yet I have fears! His eye is still the same—an eye that shrinks from another's gaze.

. . . . . .

October 13.—Nothing new these three days. What relief and what consolation I feel at having Jane with me! How we chat in the kibitka that we share together! I have convinced her at last; she no longer doubts but I shall find John. On the other hand, the poor woman is always sad. I do not press her with questions about her past life, since the day Burker compelled her to follow him to Australia. Well do I understand that she dare not tell all. It seems to me sometimes that she is on the point of saying something. It looks as though Len watches her. Whenever she sees him or he comes near her, her attitude changes, her features alter. She is afraid of him. This man is evidently her master, and at a beck from him she would follow him to the other end of the world.

Jane appears to have a great liking for Godfrey; and yet, when the dear lad comes near our kibitka to join in our conversation, she seems afraid to speak to him or even to answer him. She turns her eyes away and hangs down her head. One would think his presence pained her.

This morning we are crossing a long marshy plain. Now and again we come across puddles of brackish, almost salt water. Tom Marix says that these swamps are the remains of former lakes which used to be joined to Lake Eyre and Lake Torrens, thus forming a sea which cut the continent in two. Luckily we were able to take in a supply of water at our last halting-place, and the cattle enjoyed a good drink.

It seems there are several of these lakes, not only in the low-lying districts, but in the more elevated parts also.

The ground is damp; the pressure of our camels' feet crushes the briny crust which covers the puddles and transforms the soil into a kind of sticky mud. Sometimes the

crust resists a little longer, and when it then gives way suddenly, a splash of mire is the result.

We have had great difficulty in crossing these swamps, which spread northwest for a distance of about ten miles.

We have already met with serpents since we left Adelaide. They are rather numerous in Australia, more especially in these marshy districts, among the bushes and shrubbery. A man of our escort was even bitten by one of these venomous reptiles, at least three feet long, of a brownish color, and known to scientific men, I was told, as *Trimesurus ikaheca.* Marix immediately cauterized the wound with a pinch of gunpowder, which he placed on the man's arm and afterward set fire to. The sufferer—a white man—did not even utter a cry. I held his arm during the operation. He thanked me for doing so. I gave him an extra ration of whisky. There is every reason to believe the bite will not prove fatal.

We must be careful as to where we step when walking; and being on the back of a camel does not put you completely out of reach of the serpents either. I am always afraid on Godfrey's account, and I tremble whenever I hear the blacks cry, "vin'dohe!" a word meaning "serpent" in their language.

Last night, as the tents were being pitched for the night, two of the natives killed another large reptile. Tom Marix says that, although two-thirds of the Australian snakes are venomous, there are only five species the bite of which is dangerous to man. The serpent just killed is twelve feet long. It is a kind of boa. Our Australian friends asked for it for their evening meal. It was of course given them. This is how they prepared it:

A hole was dug in the sand, into which one of the men placed some stones previously heated in the middle of a large fire, and over which were spread some odoriferous leaves. The serpent, whose head and tail had been cut off,

"WHEN THE DEAR LAD COMES NEAR OUR KIBITKA" (*p.* 293).

was then laid in the hole and covered over with more leaves and more hot stones; and over the whole a layer of well-kneaded clay was now plastered, thick enough to prevent the steam from escaping.

We witnessed this culinary operation not without a little feeling of loathing; but when the serpent had been sufficiently cooked and was taken out of this improvised oven, I must say its flesh gave out a delicious aroma. Neither Jane nor I would taste it; and yet Marix assured us that although the white flesh of these snakes is rather insipid their liver is considered a very savory tid-bit.

"It will stand comparison," said he, "with the finest of game, or even the wood-hen."

"The wood-hen! Oh, glorious, the wood-hen!" exclaimed Jos Merritt.

And after being offered a small piece of the liver, he asked for a larger help, and could have eaten it all, eventually, I believe. Strangely free-and-easy, those Britons!

As to Gin-Ghi, he did not wait to be asked twice, and a good thick slice of steaming serpent, which he smacked with the air of a connoisseur, soon put him in good humor.

"Ai ya!" he cried, with a long sigh of regret, "with a few Ning-Po oysters, and a bottle of wine from Tao-Ching one might believe one's self at Tie-Coung-Yuan!"

And Gin-Ghi was good enough to explain to me that this was the great tea resort of Pekin.

Godfrey and Zach, overcoming their first reluctance, pressed each other to a few morsels of the snake. It was quite palatable, they affirmed. I would rather take their word for it than try for myself.

The famous dish was of course devoured to the last remnant by our native followers. Not even the few drops of fat that had oozed from the reptile while it was cooking, did they leave at the bottom of the oven.

During the night our sleep was disturbed by howls that

were heard at some distance. They came from a number of "dingos." The dingo might be called the jackal of Australia, as it is half dog and half wolf. It has a yellowish or reddish-brown coat and a long bushy tail. Happily these animals contented themselves with howling, and did not come nearer to the encampment. In large numbers they might have proved dangerous.

. . . . . .

November 19.—The heat is becoming more and more oppressive, and the creeks that we still find are almost entirely dried up. We now have to dig in the beds of these creeks to get a little water. Before long our only resource will be the wells; for the streams will have quite disappeared.

I am now compelled to admit that there is a truly unexplainable, one might say instinctive antipathy, between Len Burker and Godfrey. They never speak to each other, and they plainly avoid each other as much as possible.

I spoke to Godfrey about it one day.

"You don't seem to like Len Burker," I said.

"No, madam," he answered, "and please don't ask me to do so."

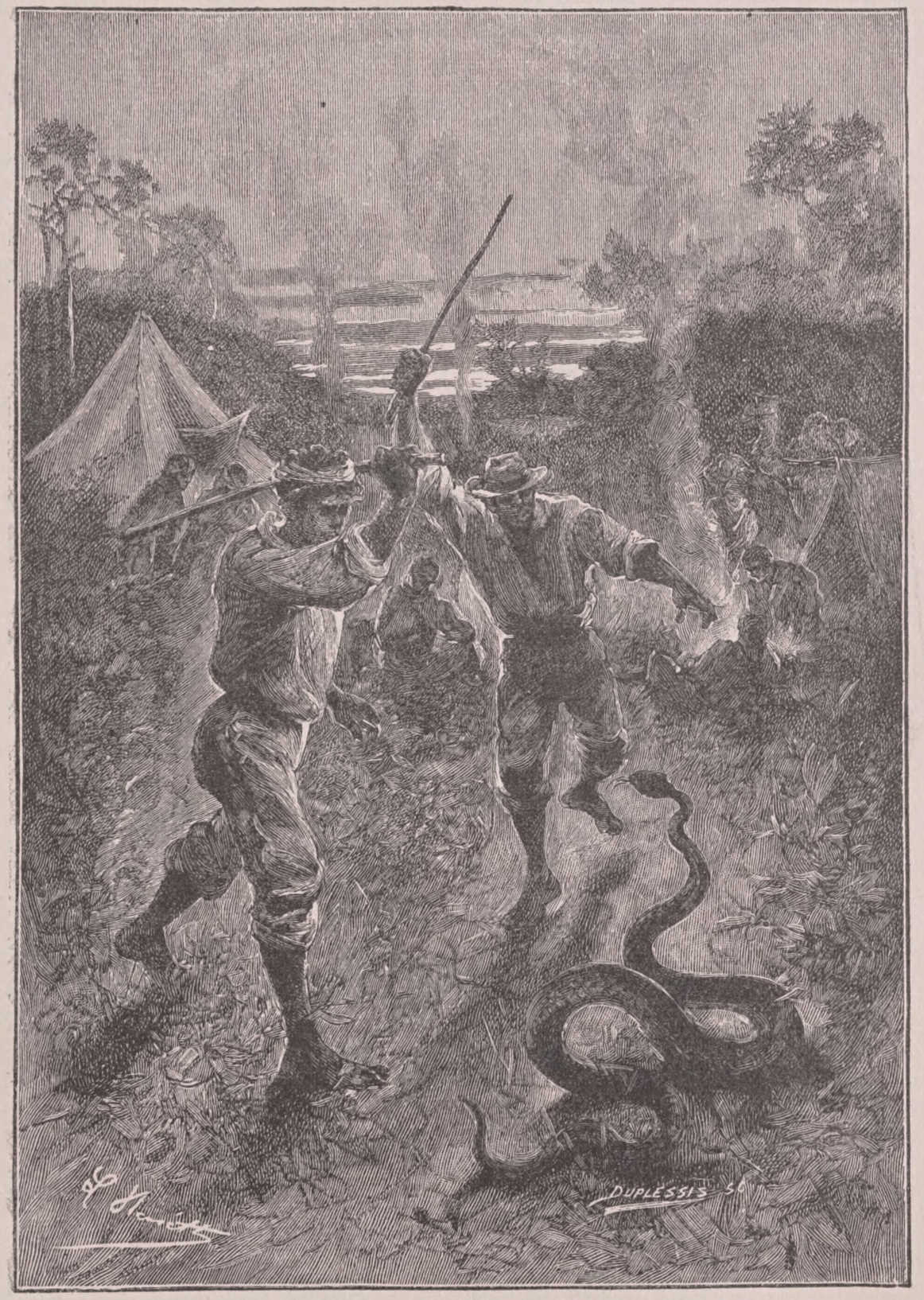
"But he is related to my family," I began; "he is a relation of mine, Godfrey, and since you like me——"

"I love you, madam, but like him——I never will!"

Dear Godfrey, what presentiment, what secret motive is this, that makes him speak thus?

. . . . . .

November 27.—To-day there lies before us an immense tract, a dreary, monotonous steppe, covered with spinifex. This is a prickly grass that has been deservedly nicknamed "porcupine grass." We have to make our way between the tufts that rise sometimes five feet above the ground, and the thorns of which are liable to prick our mounts. The spinifex has already assumed a yellowish color, which is a sign that it is now unfit for animal food. So long as the stalks



TWO OF THE NATIVES KILLED A LARGE REPTILE (*p.* 294).

are green, camels do not object to eat them ; but such is no longer the case, and their only care now is to step clear of them.

Under these conditions our journey is becoming very laborious. We must accustom ourselves to it, however, for we have before us hundreds of miles of these spinifex-covered plains. It is the shrub of the desert, the only one that can live on the barren soil of central Australia.

The heat is still increasing, and shade is nowhere to be had. Our pedestrian followers are visibly suffering from this excessive temperature. Would it be credited that five months earlier in the year, as stated by Colonel Warburton, the thermometer sometimes falls below zero, and the creeks are covered over with a layer of ice an inch thick !

Then water-courses are plentiful ; while now, however deep we might dig beneath the dried-up creeks, we should not find a single drop of water.

Marix has ordered the men of the escort who have camels to lend them now and again to those who have none. This step was taken in order to put an end to the grumblings of the blacks ; and I noticed with regret that Len Burker made himself their spokesman on this occasion. Of course the men are to be pitied : picking their steps for miles among tufts of spinifex, under a temperature which is scarcely bearable morning or evening, must be painful in the extreme ; at the same time, it is not for Burker to excite their jealousy against the whites. Indeed, the blacks are no concern of his whatever ; and I have told him to be careful.

"What I do, Dolly," he answered "is in the interest of everybody."

"I sincerely hope so," I said.

"The hardships should be equally shared by all."

"As to that business, Mr. Burker," said Tom Marix, who had unexpectedly joined us, "I'll thank you to leave

it to me; I'll make whatever arrangements are necessary."

Burker went off with ill-disguised vexation. I could see it, even without the angry look he cast in our direction. Jane noticed it, too, when she caught her husband's eye, and the poor woman immediately looked another way.

Marix has promised to do everything in his power to satisfy his men, both black and white.

. . . . . .

December 5.—During our halts we are greatly tormented by white ants. These insects swarm in myriads. They are invisible in the fine sand; but the mere pressure of one's foot brings them up to the surface.

"My skin is as tough and hard as any old shark's," said Zach to me just now, "and yet those blamed insects don't turn up their noses at it!"

In truth the hide of our camels is not thick enough to be proof against their bites. We cannot lie on the ground now without instantly being attacked by them. To escape them we should have to lie in the sun, as they cannot stand its terrific rays. This would merely be rushing from one evil to another.

Among all of us the Chinese servant is undoubtedly the least disturbed by these ants.

Is he so lazy that even their bites cannot spur him into something like action? I know not; but it is a simple fact that, while we are turning from one side to another, and beside ourselves with feverish excitement, the privileged Gin-Ghi, stretched at full length in the shade of a tuft of spinifex, sleeps peacefully and without a stir, as though these horrid insects respected his yellow skin.

Jos Merritt is almost as patient as his man is indifferent, although his long body offers the tiny assailants a wider field for action. He never complains. With a regular and automatic movement, his two arms rise and fall one

after the other, mechanically crushing thousands of the little ants; and occasionally he is heard to say, as he looks over at his invulnerable factotum:

"Really, those Chinese have been exceptionally favored by nature—Gin-Ghi?"

"Yes, Master Jos?"

"You and I must change skins!"

"Yes, Master Jos," the Celestial would drawl out, "and at the same time we must exchange our conditions."

"Oh, that's right! That's quite right! But to effect this exchange, we shall have to be previously skinned and of course you will be the first."

"Master Jos, we'll talk about it again at the third moon."

And, so saying, Gin-Ghi drops asleep again until the fifth watch, as he says in his own poetic way, that is, until the caravan is about to start off again.

. . . . . .

December 10.—This torture continues until Tom Marix gives the starting signal. Happily the ants never think of climbing up the legs of the camels, although our footmen are not, even on the move, quite free from those insupportable insects.

Besides that, when on the march, we are assailed by enemies of another kind, and no less unpleasant; these are the mosquitoes, the most formidable pest in Australia. The cattle they sting, especially in the rainy season, look as though they were seized with some epidemic disease; they grow thin, break down in health, and even die in spite of all efforts to save them.

And yet, what would we not give to be in the rainy season? The plague of ants or mosquitoes is nothing compared to the tortures of thirst provoked by the heat of November in Australia. Want of water, they say, ultimately brings on a complete annihilation of intellectual power and physical strength. And now our supply is dwindling away, our

little casks sound very empty. We filled them at the last creek; but what they contain now is but a heated liquid, made thick and muddy with incessant jolting, and it hardly quenches our thirst.

What is no less alarming is that our camels are now falling into a dragging stride instead of the high-stepping gait which is familiar to them. Their necks are stretched toward the horizon, which lies yonder at the far end of this ever dreary expanse, without a hill, without a tree, with nothing but the arid spinifex, whose long roots alone maintain it in the sand. No sign, no vestige that might suggest the presence of a well or a spring!

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December 16.—In our two stages to-day we have not traveled nine miles. Indeed I could not fail to observe that for several days past our average has become lower and lower. Strong as they are, our camels seem scarcely able to move on, especially those carrying the equipment.

Marix flies in a passion when he sees his men suddenly stopping before he has given the word to halt. He goes over to the poor beasts and lashes them with his whip, although it has but little effect on them, their hide is so thick!

This leads Jos Merritt to remark with his habitual phlegm:

"That's right! That's quite right, Mr. Marix! But let me give you a word of advice: it is not the camel you should whip, it's the driver!"

And in truth Marix would gladly take his advice, did I not interfere to prevent him. Happen what may, let us not add bad treatment to the fatigues endured by our followers. Some of them would desert us in the end. I am always afraid of it, especially in the case of the black men of the escort, although Marix continually reassures me on that point.

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"IT'S NOT THE CAMEL YOU SHOULD WHIP; IT'S THE DRIVER" (*p.* 300).

From December 17 *to December* 27.—Our journey still continues in the same conditions. At the beginning of the week there was a change in the weather accompanied by a rather sharp breeze. A few clouds rose from the north in large circular masses. They had the appearance of huge bombshells that a single spark would be sufficient to explode.

On that day—the 23d—the spark came, a streak of lightning flashed though the sky. Loud thunder-claps burst with great violence, but without those prolonged peals that are re-echoed over and over again in mountainous districts. At the same time atmospheric currents swept by us with such force that we were unable to remain on our mounts. We had to alight and even lay ourselves on the ground. Zach, Godfrey, Tom Marix, and Len Burker had great difficulty in protecting our kibitka against the force of the squall. As to camping or pitching our tents between the clumps of spinifex, it was out of the question under such conditions.

In an instant all our material would have been scattered, broken, and rendered unfit for future use.

"That's nothing," said Zach, rubbing his hands, "a storm is soon over."

"Hurrah for the storm, if it brings us water!" cried Godfrey.

Godfrey is right. Water! water! is our cry. But will it rain? That is the question.

Yes, that is the whole question, for an abundant rainfall would indeed prove to us the manna in the desert. Unfortunately the air was so dry—which accounted for the remarkable shortness of the thunder-claps—that the clouds might very well remain in a state of vapor and not dissolve into rain. And still it would have been hard to imagine a more violent storm, or a more deafening mixture of thunder and lightning.

I had an opportunity of observing what I had been told

of the behavior of the natives during a storm. They have no dread of thunder; they never close their eyes at the flashes of lightning, nor do they tremble at the loud roars in the heavens; on the contrary, the cries they uttered on this occasion were exclamations of joy. They do not seem to feel in the slightest degree that physical impression experienced by any living being when the air is loaded with electricity, and when that electricity manifests itself by the rending of the clouds in the fiery glare of the skies.

The nervous system in these primitive beings cannot be very sensitive, or it may be perhaps that they were welcoming this storm for the sake of the flood of rain it might send them. And in truth this uncertainty was for us a cruel repetition of the tortures of Tantalus.

"Mrs. Branican," said Godfrey to me, "just think! It's good pure water, Heaven's water, that is hanging there, over our heads; here are streaks of lightning bursting the clouds, and yet not a drop comes down."

"Have a little patience, my child," I answered, "let us not give up yet."

"Who talks of giving up?" queried Zach; "look, the clouds are getting thicker and flying lower; if only the wind would stop a minute, all the fireworks would end in a deluge."

Sure enough, the great danger was that the hurricane should carry off the clouds toward the south, and not let one drop of rain fall upon us.

It was now three o'clock in the afternoon, it seemed as if the horizon was clearing a little toward the north and that the storm would soon be over. What a cruel disappointment it would be!

"That's right! That's quite right!"

Never was the Englishman's favorite phraseology more appropriate or more justified. There he was, with his out-

stretched palm, assuring us that a few large drops had fallen on it.

The shower was not long in coming. We sought shelter under our waterproof cloaks. Then, without losing a moment, every receptacle that we possessed was placed on the ground, so as to gather the welcome godsend. Canvas and blankets even were stretched out; the water they would contain, when they were thoroughly soaked, would afterward be rung out and given to our animals.

Instantly the camels were able to satisfy the thirst that tortured them; for streamlets of water and puddles were at once formed between the tufts of spinifex. The plain threatened to become one vast swamp. There was water now, and in plenty; nor did we relish it the less when we remembered that the parched soil would soon absorb it all, as would a sponge, and that the sun, even now reappearing on the horizon, would not be long in evaporating the last remaining drops.

In any case our supply was assured for several days. It would enable us to continue our daily stages with men revived both morally and physically, and beasts once more in a fit state to undergo their labor! The casks were filled to their utmost capacity, everything that was watertight was used as a receptacle. As to the camels, they had not neglected to fill the internal pouch with which nature has provided them, and in which they can carry water for a certain time. Fifteen gallons—so I was told—is the capacity of this marvelous pouch.

They are rare, unfortunately, those Australian storms, at least at this time of the year when the summer heat is at its highest, and it would be foolish to reckon on such haphazard eventualities for the future. This storm had lasted scarcely three hours. Although no sign of it would presently be left in the beds of the creeks, the wells perhaps might

benefit by it to a greater extent, and we would have cause to be thankful if we but knew that this downpour was not purely local. Let us hope that it may have cooled a few hundred miles of the Australian desert.

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December 29.—In this way, and following all the time the itinerary taken by Colonel Warburton, we have reached Waterloo Spring without further accident, 140 miles from Mount Liebig. We were then on the 126th degree of longitude, as ascertained by Tom Marix and Godfrey on the map. We had just crossed, as they told me, the conventional straight line drawn from south to north between the neighboring provinces and that vast portion of the continent which bears the name of Western Australia.

CHAPTER X.

A FEW MORE EXTRACTS.

WATERLOO SPRING is not a town, not a village even. A few abandoned huts, nothing more. The nomads only stay there during the rainy season when the creeks are full, which enables them to remain there a certain length of time. Waterloo has no particular claim whatever to the suffix "Spring," a common addition to the names of all the stations in the desert. No spring flowed on its surface; indeed, as we have remarked already, although the African Sahara may boast cool and shady oases, watered with running streams, it were vain to look for such blessings on the Sahara of Australia.

This was frequently alluded to in Mrs. Branican's diary, a few additional extracts from which we shall reproduce here. Better than the most precise description, they will acquaint us with the country, and display in all their horror

OUR PROVISION OF SALT WAS RENEWED (*p.* 310).

the hardships in store for those who venture into it. They will also enable the reader to appreciate the moral energy and unconquerable pluck of the writer, her never flinching determination to reach her goal, at the price of any sacrifice.

December 30.—We must stay forty-eight hours at Waterloo Spring. These delays grieve me when I think of the distance that still separates us from the valley of the Fitz-Roy. And who knows whether we will not have to go beyond that valley in search of the Indas tribe? Since the day Harry Felton left it, what has been the life of my poor John? Did the natives avenge themselves on him for the escape of his comrade?—I must not think of that. The thought alone would kill me!

Zach Fren tries to reassure me in the following manner:

"Since Captain John and Felton were prisoners with these Indas for so many years," he argues, "it shows they had some interest in keeping them alive. Felton gave us to understand that much, ma'am. The niggers see that they have a white man who is worth something and they are waiting the opportunity to exchange him for a ransom of proportionate value. To my way of thinking, the escape of his comrade cannot have altered Captain John's condition."

God grant that such is the case!

This is the last day of the year 1890.

Fifteen years since the *Franklin* left the port of San Diego! Fifteen years! And we left Adelaide only four months and five days ago! This new year we are beginning in the desert; how will it end?

My companions would not let this day go by without wishing me a happy new year. Dear Jane came to me, a prey to the deepest emotion, and I held her for a long time in my arms. Zach and Marix shook me warmly by the hand. I know I possess in them two friends who would lay their lives down for me. All our people gathered around

me with all kinds of affectionate greeting. I say all; I must except the blacks, however: their dissatisfaction shows itself on every occasion. It is evident Marix has great trouble in keeping them together.

Len Burker, in his usual cold tone, expressed his conviction that we should meet with success. He has no doubt but we will attain the aim of our efforts. He is not sure, however, that we are right in pushing toward the Fitz Roy River. The Indas, he thinks, are more likely to be found in the immediate vicinity of Queensland, to the east of the continent. True, he says, we are going toward the spot where Felton last saw his captain—but who can say that the Indas have not moved away, etc.

All of this is said in that tone which never inspires confidence; the tone peculiar to certain people who speak to you without looking at you.

But it is Godfrey's attention that moved me most. He had gathered a bunch of those little wildflowers, that grow among the clumps of spinifex. He offered them to me with such good grace, and the words he spoke were so sweet, that tears came to my eyes. How I kissed him, my Godfrey, and how he returned my kisses! Why does the thought forever haunt me that little Wat would be just his age, that he would be good like him?

Jane was there at the time. She was so affected and became so pale at the sight of Godfrey, I thought she would faint. But she recovered and her husband took her away —I did not dare retain her.

We resumed our journey that day at four o'clock in the afternoon, under a cloudy sky. The heat was a little more tolerable. Both the saddle and the pack camels, sufficiently rested from their fatigues, quickened their step. Indeed they had even to be held back so as to allow the men on foot to keep up with them.

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January 15.—For several days we have been keeping up our quickened pace. Two or three times rain fell rather abundantly. We have not had to suffer from thirst, and our water supply is renewed. This water question is the most serious, the most terrifying also, to be considered when a tramp across these deserts is contemplated. It requires constant attention; and, so far as our itinerary is concerned, wells are truly very scarce, more so perhaps even than when Colonel Warburton was here on his way to the west coast of Tasmania.

Henceforth we are to live on our stock of provisions alone. We can no longer rely on game; it has fled these solitary regions. We see a flock of pigeons at rare intervals, and there is no way of getting close to them. They never alight among the spinifex but after a long flight, and when their wings are no longer capable of supporting them. Still our supply will hold out for several months yet, and on that point I am not uneasy. Zach Fren sees with scrupulous care that the food—preserves, flour, tea, and coffee—is methodically and regularly distributed. We ourselves are rationed just like the others. There is no exception made for anybody. The blacks then cannot complain that we are better off than they are.

Here and there too, a few scared sparrows flitter about, evidently lost in these wilds, but they are not worth the trouble of running after them.

We are still infested with myriads of white ants during our halts. As to the mosquitoes, the country is too dry for them to annoy us. Tom Marix says we will have them again when we reach cooler parts. Well, then, I would rather put up with their bites. The water that attracts them by the thousand would be cheap even at that price.

We reached Mary Spring on January 23, ninety miles from Waterloo. A group of delicate-looking trees stands

hard by. They are eucalypti, that have sucked up all the moisture around them and still are visibly declining.

"The leaves hang down like so many thirsty tongues," said Godfrey.

This comparison was quite justified.

I notice that the plucky boy has lost none of the gayety of his age. His health is still the same, a thing I was anxious about, for he is now at the critical period of his growth. Strange, that unheard-of resemblance that I cannot help remarking every instant, that same look in his eye when he turns to me, that same tone in his voice, the very way he says things and expresses his thoughts, everything reminds me of my poor John!

One day I drew Burker's attention to it.

"No, Dolly," he answered, "that's all illusion on your part. I must say I really don't see any such striking resemblance. I verily believe it only exists in your imagination. In any case it does not matter much, if that is the reason you take an interest in the boy."

"No, Len," I interrupted; "if I have shown so great an affection for Godfrey, it is because I saw him so earnest about the one aim of my life—the rescuing of John. He entreated me to bring him with us, and, moved by his prayers, I consented. And then, again, he is one of my San Diego children, one of those poor homeless little waifs that were brought up at Wat House—Godfrey is like a brother to my little Wat. . . ."

"Yes—Yes—I know, Dolly," he broke in, "and in a certain way, I understand you. I trust you will never have to repent an act in which your kind heart has had a larger share than your judgement."

"I don't like to hear you speak in that way, Len Burker," said I sharply, "I feel hurt at your remarks. What have you against Godfrey?"

"Oh, nothing, up to the present. But who knows?

Later on, perhaps, he may abuse that very pronounced affection of yours toward him. A foundling! One never knows where he comes from, who or what he is, what blood runs in his veins."

"It is the blood of good and respectable people, I am sure of it," I cried. "On board the *Brisbane* he was liked by everyone, his superiors and comrades alike; and, from what the captain told me, Godfrey never deserved a word of reprimand! Zach Fren, who ought to know, appreciates him as I do! Now, will you tell me, Burker, why you don't like that child?"

"I, Dolly? I neither like nor dislike him. I feel indifferent about him, that's all. As to my friendship, I don't give it to the first comer in that manner; my only thought at present is John, and the means of rescuing him."

If that is a lesson Burker wished to give me, it has been wasted on me, for I decline to take it. The presence of this child surely does not make me forget my husband; but I am happy in the thought that Godfrey will have aided me in my endeavors. I feel sure John will approve of what I have done and what I intend doing for the boy.

When I went over this interview with Jane the poor woman lowered her head and made no reply.

In future I must refrain from this subject. Jane will not, she cannot, take sides against Burker. I understand her reticence; it is her duty.

. . . . . .

January 29.—We have reached the banks of a little lake, a sort of lagoon, which Marix believes to be the White Lake. It deserves its name just now; for at the bottom of the basin, in place of the water, which is all evaporated, there lies a layer of salt. One more relic, so it seems, of that inland sea which at one time divided Australia into two large islands.

Zach has renewed our provision of salt ; but drinkable water would have been more appreciated.

This neighborhood is alive with rats, smaller than the ordinary ones. We have to guard against their onslaught during the night. They are so voracious they gnaw everything in their reach.

On the other hand, they seem to be no contemptible game in the eyes of the blacks ; for, having caught a few dozen of these animals, our men prepared them, cooked them, and made apparently a very enjoyable meal of them. We should be very short of provisions indeed to have recourse to such a dish. God grant we may never be reduced to it !

We are at last on the edge of the desert known as the Great Sandy Desert.

Another change in the look of the steppe for the last twenty miles. The spinifex is becoming scarcer ; in certain places it has disappeared altogether. Is the ground so dry that it cannot support even such poor vegetation as this ? Who would not believe it, on seeing the immense plain, undulated here and there with little mounds of red sand, and no sign of the least creek in sight? It suggests the thought that it never rains on this sunburnt waste—not even in winter.

In the face of this lamentable barrenness, this woeful aridity, there is not one of us but is seized with the saddest presentiments. Tom Marix shows me these desolate wilds on the map : they are represented by a blank space through which are drawn the itineraries of Giles and Gibson. A tortuous line toward the north indicates the uncertainty of Colonel Warburton's course, and his numerous detours and countermarches in search of wells. Here, his followers are sick, dying of hunger, utterly prostrated, There, his animals succumb one by one ; his son, too, is dying. Anyone intending to undertake the same trip had better not read the account of his travels. The bravest

heart might fail. But I have read it, and I am reading it over again. I will not allow myself to be frightened—what this explorer did in order to study the unknown regions of the continent, I am doing to find John! There lies the sole aim of my life, and fulfill it I will.

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February 3.—During the past five days we have again been obliged to reduce the average rate of our stages. So much lost on the distance we have yet to travel! It is greatly to be regretted. The ground is so irregular, it is impossible for us to proceed in a straight line; and at times we are obliged to go up and down very steep inclines. In many places the country is intersected by downs which our camels must needs go round, since they cannot climb up them; in others, sandy hillocks rise to a height of a hundred feet, separated from each other by intervals six or seven hundred feet wide.

Into this sand our footmen sink knee deep, and progress becomes more and more laborious.

The heat is killing. One cannot imagine with what intensity the sun darts its rays on our heads. They are arrows of fire, which pierce you in a thousand places. Jane and I can scarcely endure them under the shelter of our kibitka. What must our companions suffer during the morning and evening marches! Zach Fren, strong as he is, is sorely tried with all these hardships; but he never complains, nor has he lost any of his good-humor, this devoted friend, whose existence seems so closely bound up in my own!

Jos Merritt endures all with a calm composure and a power of endurance that one would almost envy him. Gin-Ghi, less patient than his master, gives free vent to his grievances, but fails to move him in the least. And, when I think that this eccentric being undergoes such trials for the sake of a hat!

"That's right! That's quite right!" is his invariable reply when this subject is touched upon. "But if you knew what a *rarissima avis* of a hat!

"Some old clown's topper, most likely!" muttered Zach Fren one day, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"A rag!" added Gin-Ghi, "a rag unfit to be turned into a slipper!"

In the middle of the day, between eight and four o'clock, it would be impossible to walk a step. The camp is pitched wherever we happen to be; and two or three tents are put up. The men of the escort, whites and blacks, lie as best they can in the shade of the camels. What is frightful to contemplate is that our supply of water will soon be exhausted. What will become of us if we find none but dried-up wells? I feel that Marix is extremely uneasy, although he tries to hide his anxiety from me. It is wrong of him; he ought to tell me everything. I can bear it all and will not tremble.

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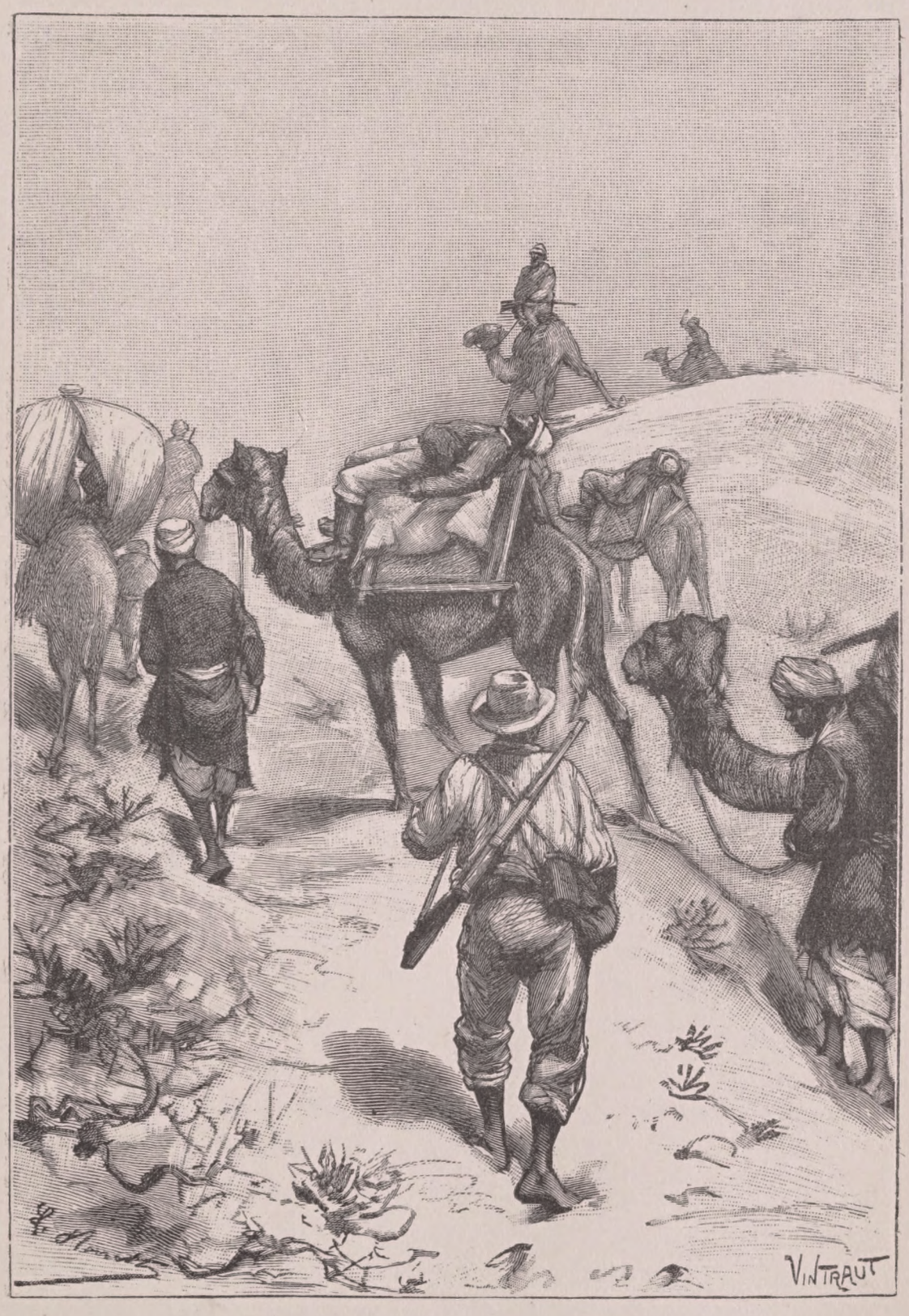
February 14.—Eleven days have slowly passed along, during which we have had but two hours' rain. We were scarcely able to procure enough to fill our casks and to satisfy the thirst of men and beasts. In this condition we reached Emily Spring, the well of which is absolutely dry, Our cattle are exhausted. Jos Merrit is at a loss to know how to keep his camel on the move. He does not beat it, however, but tries to coax it along. I can hear him say to it:

"Now then, my poor old thing; this is no easy job, of course, I know; still, you have no trouble on your mind, *you* haven't!"

The poor thing does not seem to comprehend this very fine distinction.

We continue our journey in greater perplexity than ever. Two of the unfortunate brutes are sick. They cannot



THE SICK MEN (*p.* 313).

keep up to us, and they will never be able to follow us to the end. One of them carried provisions; his load has been transferred to one of the saddle-camels of the escort.

Happily the male ridden by Marix is still on his legs.

We must leave the two sick ones behind; were we to let them die of hunger and thirst they would suffer terrible agonies; it seems more humane to end their miseries at once.

The caravan passes on and winds its way around a mound of sand—two shots are heard—Marix joins us again, and the journey continues.

What is still more alarming is the health of two of our men, whose state causes me great anxiety. They have been seized with fever; the sulphate of quinine, with which the medicine-chest is well supplied, is not spared them; but they are parched with thirst. We have no more water, and nothing shows that we are in the vicinity of a well.

The sick men are stretched on the backs of two camels, led by some of their comrades. Human beings cannot be left behind like cattle. We owe them every care; it is our duty, and we will do it. But that merciless heat is slowly devouring them.

Marix, accustomed as he is to the trials of the desert, and an experienced hand, too, at doctoring his men in the country police, confesses himself at his wits' end. Water, water we clamor for and ask of the clouds, since the earth can no longer afford us any.

Those of us who best withstand the fatigues and support this excessive heat are the native blacks.

Still, although they suffer less than we do, their discontent increases day by day. In vain Marix endeavors to calm them. The more restless spirits among them keep apart during the halts and excite each other; and symptoms of an imminent mutiny are but too evident.

On the 21st they all with one accord refused to continue

the journey toward the northwest, giving as their excuse that they were dying of thirst. Their excuse was, alas, but too serious. For the past twelve hours our casks had been quite empty. We had had to fall back on alcolohic drinks, and their effect of course is deplorable, affecting the head as they do.

I had to appear myself in the midst of those obstinate men. What I proposed to make them understand, if possible, was that stopping where they were under such circumstances was not the way to put an end to their sufferings.

"We don't want to stop here, either," answered one of them, "we want to turn back."

"Back, and where to?"

"Back to Mary Spring."

"There is no water at Mary Spring," I answered, "and well you know it."

"If there is no more water at Mary Spring," returned the native, "we'll find some a little above it, close to Mount Wilson, in the direction of Sturt Creek."

I look at Marix. He brings out the map of the Great Sandy Desert. We consult it. True enough, north of Mary Spring, there is marked a somewhat important stream, which may not be entirely dried up, perhaps. But how could the native know of the existence of this stream? I question him on the subject. He hesitates at first, but eventually confesses that Mr. Burker spoke to them about it. He even was the man who had suggested to them going toward Sturt Creek.

I feel greatly annoyed that Burker should have been so imprudent—was it only imprudence?—as to give the blacks the idea of returning eastward. Not only would it cause further delay, but it would necessitate a change in our itinerary, which would then take us away from the Fitz-Roy River.

I straightway seek an explanation with him.

"What can be done, Dolly?" he answers. "It is better to expose one's self to a little delay, or even make a detour, than to persist in following a track on which there is no well."

"In any case, Mr. Burker," remarked Zach Fren sharply, "it is to Mrs. Branican you should have brought your ideas, not to those niggers!"

"You are behaving in such a way with the blacks of the escort," added Marix, "that I can do nothing with them. Are you their leader, Mr. Burker, or am I?"

"Your remarks are out of place, Tom Marix!" replied Burker.

"Out of place or not, my remarks are justified by your conduct, sir; and I wish you would bear them in mind."

"I have no orders to receive from anyone here but Mrs. Branican."

"Very well then, Len Burker," I answered. "For the future if you have anything to suggest, please come to me, and to no one else."

"I could go on ahead, if you would let me, madam," put in Godfrey, "and scout for wells. Who knows but I might find——"

"Wells without any water in them!" grumbled Burker, as he went off shrugging his shoulders.

I can easily imagine what Jane must have suffered, for she witnessed this little scene. Her husband's behavior, so contrary to that friendly spirit that should reign among our men, may create us the greatest difficulties. I had to join my efforts to those made by Marix to get the natives to give up their intention of retracing their steps.

They yielded at last, after a long argumentation, but stipulated at the same time that if no water was found within

forty-eight hours, they would go back to Mary Spring, on their way to Sturt Creek.

. . . . . .

February 23.—What unspeakable sufferings we endured during the two following days! Our sick men had grown worse. Three more camels fell never to rise again, with outstretched neck and swollen sides, unable to make another move. We were obliged to kill them. Out of the three two were used for riding. Now there are four white men of the escort compelled to journey on foot at a time when even riding is so tiresome.

And not a human being on this great sandy desert! Not a single native from Tasmania who could tell us the whereabouts of a well! Evidently we have strayed from Warburton's route, for he never traveled for so long a time without being able to renew his supply of water. Frequently the wells he did meet contained but a thick liquid, hardly fit to be drunk; but we should have felt thankful for such.

To-day, at last, at the end of the morning's stage, we were able to quench our thirst—Godfrey discovered a well in the vicinity of Emily Spring. Early in the morning the brave lad went some miles ahead of us, and two hours later we saw him returning at full speed.

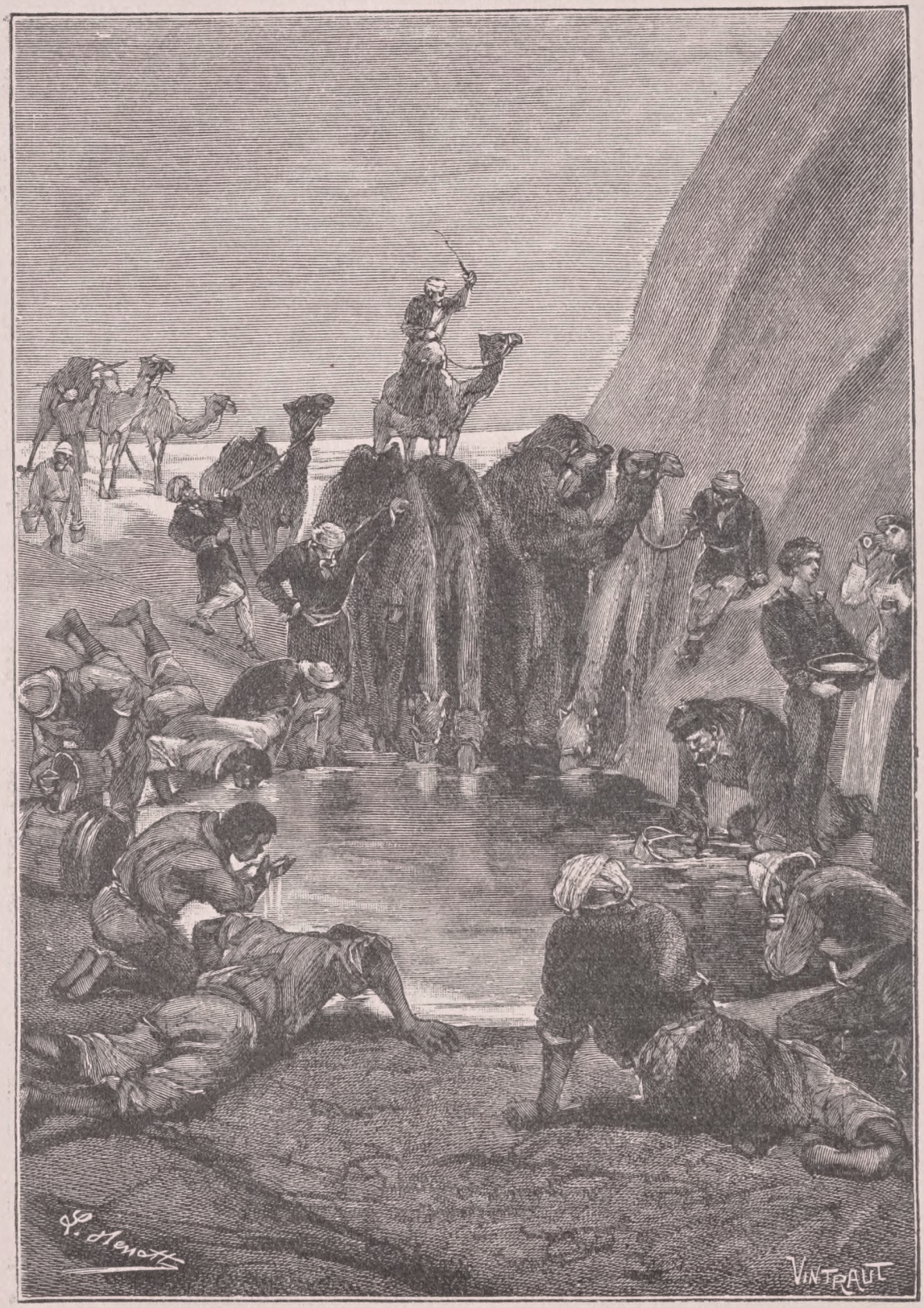
"A well! A well!" he cried from as far off as it was possible for us to hear him.

At this cry our little company revived. The camels even stepped out briskly, as though the one ridden by Godfrey had told them on returning:

"Water! Water!"

One hour later we halted under a clump of dried up trees, shading the well. Luckily they were gum trees and not eucalypti, or else no water would have been left for us.

Nor must it be forgotten that such wells as one occasionally meets here are soon emptied out by a thirsty caravan. They hold, at best, but a little water hidden deep beneath



"WITH WHAT DELIGHT WE QUENCHED OUR THIRST!" (*p.* 317).

the sand. The fact is, as I understand, that they have not been made by the hand of man ; they are but natural cavities formed during the rainy season. They are seldom more than five or six feet deep—which is just enough to save the water, thus sheltered from the sun's rays, from being evaporated or rendered foul even during the long heat of summer.

Sometimes these reservoirs are not marked by any trees ; and it is then but too easy to pass by them without perceiving them. The traveler must therefore be constantly on the alert ; a wise recommendation of Colonel Warburton's which we followed to the letter.

This time Godfrey was in luck. The well, near which we halted at eleven in the morning, contained more water than was necessary both for our camels and for our supply. This water, filtered through sands, had retained all its limpidity and freshness ; for the cavity, being at the foot of a down, was not struck directly by the rays of the sun.

With what delight we quenched our thirst in the face of such abundance ! It was even thought prudent to urge our companions to drink moderately, else they would certainly have done themselves harm.

The beneficial effects of water cannot be imagined by anyone who has not felt the tortures of thirst for a considerable time. The result is instantaneous, the most broken down feel a new life, strength returns immediately, and with strength comes courage. It is more than a revival—it is a new birth.

The next morning at four o'clock we resumed our journey toward the northwest, in order to reach Joanna Spring by the shortest way, a distance of about 190 miles from Mary Spring.

These few notes, taken from Mrs. Branican's diary, will be enough to show how her energy never left her a moment. We must now continue the narrative of this journey, for

which the future still reserves so many adventures impossible to foresee, and so important by their consequences.

CHAPTER XI.

SYMPTOMS.

AS hinted in the last few lines of Mrs. Branican's diary, strength and confidence had once more returned to the members of the caravan. The provisions had never failed, and would not fail for several months. Water alone had been wanting on several occasions; but the last well, discovered by Godfrey, had yielded more than was needed, and the journey was resumed cheerfully.

True, there was still the same stifling heat to endure, the same burning air to breathe along those interminable plains, without trees or shade of any kind. And very few are the travelers who can stand this broiling climate with impunity, especially when they are not natives of Australia. What the native can withstand kills the stranger. One must be specially born for this murderous climate.

Nothing but downs as yet and long symmetrical monticules of red sand. It would recall a land recently the scene of some huge conflagration, the livid glare of which, intensified by the solar rays, burns the eye of the beholder. The soil was so hot that it would have been impossible for the whites to walk on it barefooted. As to the natives, they were so hardened to it by habit that it should have given them no pretext for complaining; they did so, however, and their ill-feeling grew more apparent every day. Had not Tom Marix desired to retain a full escort, in case he should be attacked by some nomad tribe, he most assuredly would have asked Mrs. Branican to send them about their business.

Moreover, Marix saw daily growing around him the difficulties inherent to an expedition of this kind ; and, when he thought that all these toils and all these dangers would lead to no result, he must indeed have held complete mastery of himself not to allow his thoughts to be seen. Zach Fren alone had guessed them and was angry with him for not sharing his hopes.

"Really, Tom," said he one day, "I never thought you were the sort to show the white feather !"

"The white feather ? That's not it, mate ! The old pluck won't cry off to the last ! It is not trudging along through this waste I am thinking of ; it's getting to the other end and then having to come back again without having done any good."

"Do you believe then, Tom, that Captain John has died since Felton came away ?"

"I can't tell, Zach ; and you can't either."

"Yes, I can, just as easy as I can tell that a ship leans to the starboard when you turn her helm to the larboard."

"Now, Zach, you are talking just like Mrs. Branican or Godfrey, and you work up your hopes into certainties. I sincerely trust you are right. Well, then, Captain John, if he is alive, is in the hands of the Indas ; but where are the Indas, that's the trouble."

"Right where they are, Tom ; and that's where the caravan will go, were we to cruise around for the next six months. Why, hang it, man, when you can't sail on with the wind in your teeth, you tack about and get there all the same."

"You do that on sea, Zach, where you know what port you are steering to. But, right here, how do we know where we are going ?"

"The man that throws up the sponge will never find that out, any way !"

"I am not that man, Zach !"

"What's worse, Tom, is that some people might think it from your looks. The man that can't hide his fears makes a poor captain, and he'll never have but a half-hearted crew. Take care of your face, Tom; not for Mrs. Branican's sake, nothing can shake her; but for the white people of our escort! Suppose they should ever go and join them niggers."

"I answer for them as for myself."

"And I'll go bail for you as I would for myself, Tom! So don't let us talk of lowering our flag so long as the masts are standing!"

"And whoever dreams of it, Zach, unless Len Burker?"

"Oh! him? I'll lay you dollars to doughnuts, friend, that if I was captain, he'd have been at the bottom of the hold with a good old bullet to each foot, long ago! But let him look out, I've got my eye on him!"

Zach Fren was right to keep his eye on Len Burker; to the latter alone it would be due if ever the expedition became disorganized. Unceasingly did he stir up discontent among the blacks of the escort, and this is one of the causes that might ruin the success of the undertaking; but in truth, even though this danger had not existed, Tom Marix would have entertained very little more hope of meeting the Indas and rescuing Captain John.

The neighborhood of the Fitz Roy River may have been the favorite haunt of those Indas, and thus far the course followed by the caravan was justified; but circumstances may have obliged them to move away—the exigencies of warfare, for instance. Peace but seldom reigns among those tribes, small though they be, containing no more than 250 or 300 souls each. There are inveterate feuds between them, rivalries which call for blood and whose cravings are the more readily obeyed as, for cannibals, warfare means a hunt. The foe is not a foe only, he is the toothsome game on which the victor will regale. Thence

GODFREY SPIED TWO BLACKS (*p.* 321).

arise fights, pursuits, flights which sometimes take them a considerable distance away.

It would therefore be of the greatest advantage to know whether the Indas had not abandoned their habitual location, and this could be ascertained only by falling upon an Australian from the northwest.

To this end Marix directed his best endeavors, heartily seconded as he was by Godfrey, who, in spite of Mrs. Branican's recommendations, her injunctions even, would sometimes stray several miles ahead. When he was not in search of a well he would be looking for a native; but hitherto it had been in vain. The country was deserted, and in truth, to what human being, however roughened his nature might be, could it have afforded the very necessaries of life? Venturing in the vicinity of the telegraph line was barely possible, and even there we know at the cost of what hardships.

On March 9, about half-past nine in the morning, a cry was heard some short distance away—a cry made up of these two syllables: "coo, eeh!"

"There are natives somewhere about," said Marix.

"Natives?" inquired Dolly.

"Yes, madam, that is their way of calling each other."

"Let us try to catch up to them," suggested Zach Fren.

The caravan had not proceeded another hundred steps when Godfrey spied two blacks among the downs. To get hold of them would be no easy matter, for, as soon as an Australian sees white men, he runs away as if for his very life. These two were trying to conceal themselves in the spinifex behind a high red sand mound. But Mrs. Branican's friends surrounded them and brought them up to her.

One might have been fifty years old, the other, his son, about twenty. They were both on their way to Lake Woods Station, which belongs to the telegraph service.

Some little presents of cloth stuff, and, better still, a few pounds of tobacco, soon made them friendly and quite willing to give satisfactory answers to Tom Marix's questions —answers which Tom immediately translated for Mrs. Branican, Godfrey, Zach, and their companions.

The men had from the first openly declared where they were going—a statement of very little interest. Marix now inquired where they were coming from, which was far more important.

"We come from over there—far, far away," answered the father, pointing toward the northwest.

"From the coast?"

"No—from the interior."

"From Tasmania?"

"Yes—from the Fitz Roy River."

The very river which was daily, hourly spoken of in the ranks of the caravan.

"What tribe do you belong to?" asked Marix.

"The Goursis."

"Are they nomads?"

The native did not seem to understand.

"Is it a tribe that goes from one place to another," explained Tom. "You don't live in the same camping-ground always, do you?"

"We live at the village of Goursi," answered the younger man, who appeared rather intelligent.

"Is that near the Fitz Roy?"

"Yes, ten long days' journey from where it throws itself into the sea."

Now it is into the King's Gulf that the Fitz Roy flows; and that was actually the spot where the *Dolly's Hope's* second voyage had ended in 1883. The ten days' journey, as the young native had expressed it, meant that the village of Goursi should be about a hundred miles from the coast, —a fact at once ascertained by Godfrey on his map of

SOME LITTLE PRESENTS SOON MADE THEM FRIENDLY (*p.* 322).

Western Australia, which showed the course of the Fitz Roy for a distance of 250 miles from its source among the half-explored regions of Tasmania.

"Do you know the Indas tribe?" then asked Tom Marix.

The eyes of the father and son seemed to kindle at the mention of this name.

"Evidently the Indas and the Goursis must be hostile to each other, perhaps at war," observed Marix, addressing Mrs. Branican.

"It seems likely," said Dolly, "and perhaps these men know the whereabouts of the Indas. Ask them about it, Marix, and try to get as accurate an answer as possible. On what they say may depend the success of our efforts."

Marix asked the question point-blank, and the elder man replied, without hesitation, that the Indas were then high up the river.

"How far are they from the village of Goursi?"

"Twenty days' journey facing the rising sun," answered the younger.

This distance being calculated on the map, it was surmised that the Indas' camp should be about 280 miles from the spot then occupied by the caravan. As for the rest, this information tallied with the directions previously given by Harry Felton.

"Is your tribe often at war with the Indas?"

"Always!" cried the young man.

And the tone of his voice and the violence of his gesture bespoke the wild fire of the cannibal's hatred.

"And we will hunt them down," added the old man, his teeth gnashing in pleasurable anticipation, "and we will beat them when the white chief will not be among them to give them advice."

Mrs. Branican's emotion, and that of her friends, can easily be imagined when Tom Marix translated this answer.

Could this white chief, evidently a prisoner with the Indas, be any other but Captain John?

And at Dolly's entreaties, Marix plied the two natives with further questions. They could give but very vague iuformation about the white chief. They did know for a fact, however, that three months ago, at the time of their last encounter, he was still in the power of the Indas.

"And but for him," cried the young Australian, "the Indas would not have a man left by this time!"

It concerned the hearers but little whether there was exaggeration in this or not; they had obtained the information they were so anxious to have. John Branican and the Indas were less than three hundred miles away, toward the northwest. They would be found on the banks of the Fitz Roy.

As the camp was about being raised, Jos Merritt detained the two natives who had just been dismissed with more presents by Mrs. Branican, and begged Tom Marix to question them as to the grand gala hats worn by the chiefs of the Goursis tribe and likewise those of the Indas.

And if the truth must be told, Jos Merritt did not hang on their lips with less panting emotion than Dolly had done during their previous interrogatory.

The worthy collector had every reason to be satisfied, as was shown by the hearty "Right! That's right!" which broke from his lips when he learnt that hats of foreign manufacture were not uncommon among the Australians of the northwest. These hats, he was informed, usually adorned the heads of the principal chiefs on grand occasions.

"You understand, Mrs. Branican," observed Jos Merritt afterward, "finding Captain John, that's right! that's quite right! but being able to put my hand on that historical treasure, in search of which I have gone over the five parts of the world, is still better."

"Evidently," answered Mrs. Branican, who, under the circumstances, did not seem to feel surprised at the remark.

"You heard that, Gin-Ghi?" added the Englishman, turning to his servant.

"I did, Master Jos," replied the Chinaman, "and when we have found that hat——"

"We will return to England, go back to Liverpool, and there, Gin-Ghi, with a superb black cap, a red silk gown and a yellow macoual, you will have nothing more to do than show my collection to amateurs. Now are you happy?"

"As the haïtang flower, on the point of blooming beneath the breath of the zephir when the rabbit of Jade is gone down toward the west," was Gin-Ghi's metaphorical reply.

Nevertheless he shook his head with as little faith in his future happiness as if his master had assured him that he should be made a seven-buttoned mandarin.

Len Burker had been present during Marix's conversation with the natives, whose language he understood, but had taken no share in it. Not one question about Captain John had come from him. He listened attentively, evidently noting in his memory everything connected with the present position of the Indas. He observed on the map the spot where the tribe was then camping on the Fitz-Roy River, he calculated the distance that the caravan would have to travel to reach there, and the time it would take to do so.

In reality it would be a matter of a few weeks, if no obstacle sprang up in their way, if the means of transportation did not fail them, and if they were able to withstand the fatigues and sufferings occasioned by the heat. Len Burker felt that these cheerful tidings would give renewed courage to everybody; and his wicked heart's blood boiled at the thought. What! Captain John would be found among the natives; and thanks to the ransom that Dolly was bringing with her, he would be rescued out of their hands!

While Burker was thinking over the possibility of such an issue, Jane saw his brow darken, his eyes become bloodshot, a sinister look spread over his features like the reflection of his inner thought. She felt frightened ; a presentiment of some imminent calamity took possession of her and, as her husband turned his glance upon her, she well-nigh fainted.

The unfortunate woman had understood what was going on in his crime-hardened soul.

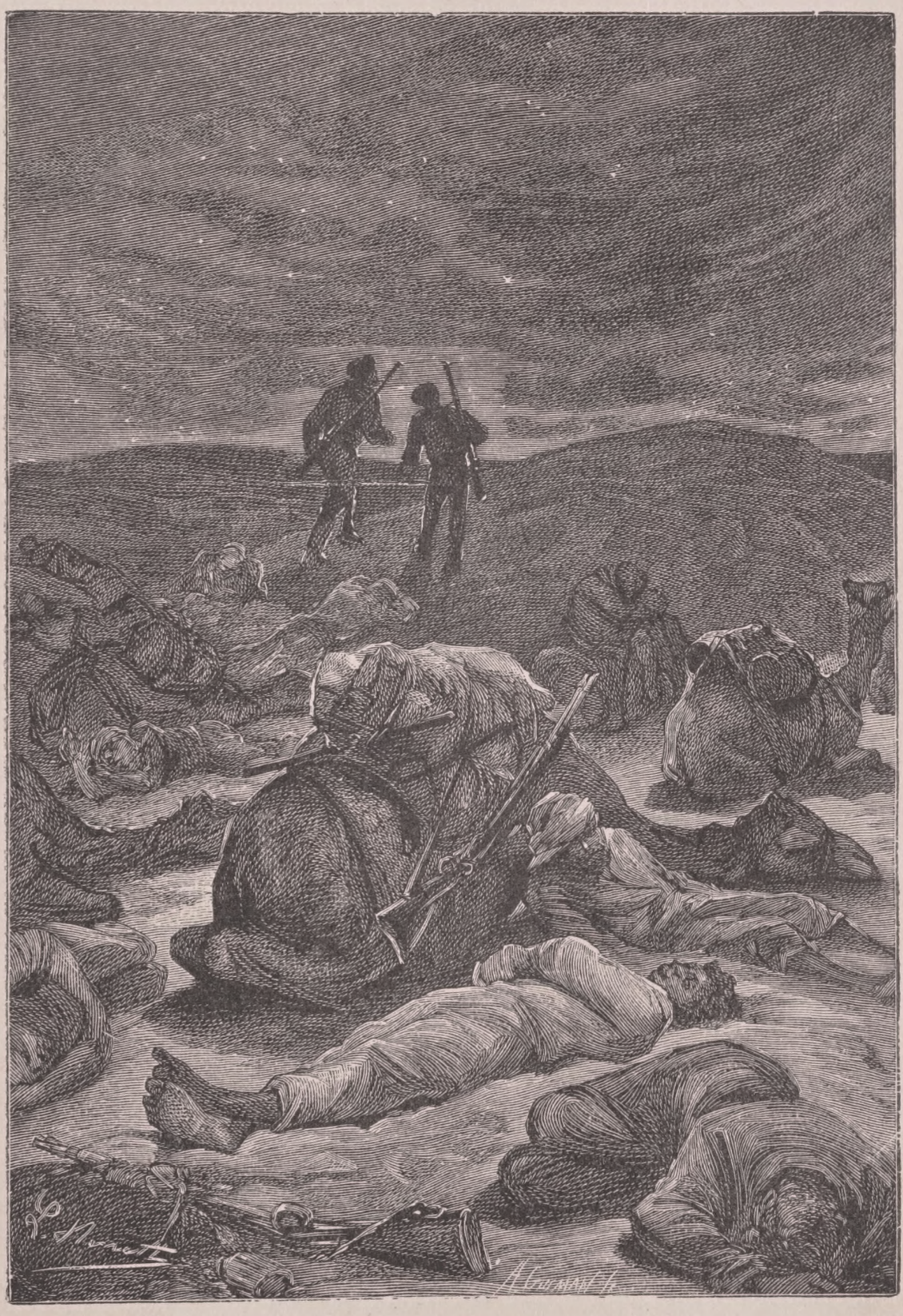
As a matter of fact, Len Burker was then thinking to himself that, should John and Dolly meet, it would mean the ruin of his future prospects. They would sooner or later find out Godfrey's identity. His wife would let the secret escape her if he did not put it out of her power to do so ; and yet Jane's life was necessary to his plans ; for at Mrs. Branican's death her fortune could not come into his hands save through her cousin Jane.

So then Jane should be separated from Dolly, and as to himself, he should push on to the Indas and do away with John Branican before the caravan arrived.

For so determined and so callous a man as Len Burker, this was but too feasible, and an unexpected circumstance would presently render it more so.

On that day, at four in the afternoon, Tom Marix gave the signal to start and the party set off again in the usual order. Past fatigues were forgotten. Dolly had inspired her companions with the energy which animated her. They were nearing the goal—success was no longer doubted—the blacks even appeared in better humor, and perhaps Marix could have relied on their help to the end, if Len Burker had not been there to breathe the spirit of treachery and mutiny into them.

The caravan, now going at fair speed, had almost fallen back into Colonel Warburton's track. However, the heat had increased, and the nights were stifling. Over this



"ON FOOT! ON FOOT!" CRIED MARIX (*p.* 330).

desert plain, without a single tree, no shade could be found but at the foot of the downs, and the sun's rays fell so perpendicularly that this was reduced almost to nothing.

Nor indeed was the heat the greatest of their torments; worse still was the lack of water. Wells had to be looked for at great distances, and this lengthened the journey by hundreds of detours. Most part of the time it was the ever-willing Godfrey, or the indefatigable Tom Marix, who volunteered their services. Mrs. Branican never saw them going off without a pang at heart. But no storm could be hoped for now. On the clear expanse of the sky, from one horizon to another, not a vestige of a cloud was to be seen. From the earth alone could water come now.

Whenever Marix or Godfrey would discover a well, the caravan wended its way in that direction. The animals were hurried on, everyone quickened step under the goad of thirst, and what did they find in most cases? A muddy liquid, lying at the bottom of a well swarming with rats. Although the men of the escort did not hesitate to drink it, Dolly, Jane, Godfrey, Zach Fren and Len Burker were prudent enough to wait until Marix had cleaned out the well and extracted a somewhat less impure water from the sands underneath. Then only did they satisfy their thirst and collect the supply which was to last them until the next well was reached.

Such was their mode of proceeding for the following week—from the 10th to the 17th of March—without any other mishaps, but with a daily increase of fatigue which could hardly be borne much longer. The condition of the two sick men had in no way improved; on the contrary there was fear of their fever terminating fatally. Tom Marix, now short of five camels, hardly knew how to provide for the carrying of the baggage.

The leader of the expedition began to feel extremely uneasy, and Mrs. Branican was not less so than he, although

she did not allow it to be perceived in her look. The first to set out and the last to stop, she gave an example of the most extraordinary courage, coupled with a hopefulness that nothing could shake.

And what would she not have willingly endured so as to avoid these incessant delays, so as to shorten this interminable journey?

One day she asked Marix why he did not make straight for the upper part of the Fitz Roy.

"I have thought of that," he answered, "but it is always the question of water that prevents me, Mrs. Branican. By going in the direction of Joanna Spring, we are sure of coming across a certain number of wells, those that Colonel Warburton has placed on record."

"Are there none on the northern territory?" asked Dolly.

"There may be, but you see I am not sure of it," answered Tom. "And, besides, we must consider that those wells, if there be any, may be dried up by this time, whereas by continuing in a westerly direction we are sure of reaching the Okaover River, where Colonel Warburton encamped. Now, this Okaover is a running stream, and there we will be enabled to take in a full supply before reaching the Fitz Roy valley."

"Very well, Tom," replied Mrs. Branican, "since it must be so, let us push on to Joanna Spring."

This was done, and the fatigues of this part of the journey exceeded any as yet endured by our tried travelers. Although the summer season was now in its third month, the temperature still remained stationary at an average of forty degrees Centigrade in the shade, and this means in the shade of night. The wayfarers could scarcely breathe the stifling atmosphere. The wells did not contain sufficient water for all of them. Ten miles were barely covered in the length of a day. The men on foot no longer walked,

GODFREY HELD DOLLY BY THE HAND (*p.* 331).

they dragged themselves along. The attentions incessantly given the two invalids by Dolly, Jane, and Harriet, weak as they were themselves, afforded them no relief. It would have been advisable for their sake to halt, to camp in some village, and take a long rest, until the heat should have lessened. But no such thing was possible.

During the afternoon of March 17, two more pack-camels died, one of which had carried the presents intended for the Indas. Marix was obliged to transfer their load to a couple of saddle-camels—which necessitated putting more of his men on foot. The brave fellows did not complain, and accepted this additional fatigue without a word. How different with the blacks, who were always grumbling and were so serious a cause of anxiety to their leader. Was it not to be apprehended that some day they would desert the caravan, perhaps after pillaging it?

At length, on the evening of March 19, the caravan halted five miles from Joanna Spring, near a well, the water of which had sunk six feet into the sand. It had been impossible to proceed one step further that day.

The atmosphere was exceptionally heavy. The blast of a red-hot furnace is not more burning than the air they inhaled. That spotless blue sky, similar to that which is noticed in certain Mediterranean districts at the approach of a mistral, had a strange and threatening appearance.

Tom Marix observed this state of things with a feeling of uneasiness that did not escape Zach Fren.

"There's something coming, eh, friend? Something you don't care for, either?

"Yes, Zach," was the reply. "Nothing short of a simoon!"

"Well, that's only a squall, eh? and it'll bring water, I guess?" said the sailor.

"Not at all, Zach, it will bring a more frightful drought

than ever ; and, in the middle of Australia, I can't tell you what it might not bring !"

Such words from a man of Tom's experience were of a nature to appall Mrs. Branican and her companions.

Every precaution was at once taken in view of this "squall," as Fren had termed it. It was nine o'clock in the evening. The tents had not been pitched—an unnecessary trouble during these stifling nights. After satisfying their thirst, all mechanically took the rations which Tom Marix had just served out, but scarcely any of them thought of tasting the food. What was wanted was fresh air ; the stomach suffered less than the respiratory organs. A few hours' sleep would have done these poor people more good than a few mouthfuls of food. But how was it possible to sleep in an atmosphere so hot that one would have imagined it had been rarefied ?

Up to midnight nothing abnormal happened. Tom Marix, Fren, and Godfrey watched in turn. Every now and then one of them would get up to observe the horizon toward the north. This horizon was of a sinister brightness. The moon, which had set at the same time as the sun, had just disappeared behind the hills to the west. Hundreds of stars sparkled around the Southern Cross, which illuminates the Antarctic pole.

About three hours past midnight all this brightness vanished. A sudden obscurity enveloped the plain from one horizon to the other.

"On foot ! On foot !" cried Tom Marix.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Branican, who had immediately sprung to her feet.

Near her, Jane, Harriet, Godfrey, and Zach Fren were trying to recognize each other in this darkness. The animals, stretched on the ground, raised their heads, at the same time bellowing themselves hoarse with fright.

"What is the meaning of all this?" again asked Mrs. Branican.

"The simoon!" simply answered Tom Marix.

And these were the last words that could be heard. The air was suddenly filled with such a tumult that the ear was as incapable of hearing a sound as was the eye of catching a glimmer in the midst of the obscurity.

It was, as Marix had said, the simoon, one of those sudden hurricanes that ravage vast tracts of the Australian deserts. A huge cloud had risen in the south and lowered over the plain—a cloud not of sand alone, but of the hot embers that it had swept up from the calcined districts it had traversed.

Around the encampment, the mounds, heaving to and fro like the billows of the sea, broke up not into a briny spray, but into an impalpable sand; all this was blinding, deafening, and suffocating. It seemed as though the whole plain would be leveled down by the mighty blast on its surface. Had the tents been raised there would not have been a shred of them left.

All felt the irresistible torrent of air and sand whizzing over them with the hiss of a discharge of musketry. Godfrey held Dolly with both hands, determined not to be separated from her, should this formidable assault carry off the caravan to the north.

This indeed was actually happening, and no resistance was possible.

For one hour—one hour which was sufficient to alter the whole aspect of the country—Mrs. Branican and her companions, including the two sick men, were driven over a distance of four or five miles, scrambling to their feet only to be knocked down again, sometimes turned round and round, like pieces of straw in the middle of a whirlwind. They could neither see nor hear each other, they might

never see each other again. In this way they reached the neighborhood of Joanna Spring, on the banks of the Oka-over Creek just as the light of dawning day burst through the last cloud of the simoon.

Did everybody muster at roll-call?

Alas, Mrs. Branican, her maid Harriet, Godfrey, Jos Merrit, Gin-Ghi, Zach Fren, Tom Marix, his white followers, were all there, along with four saddle-camels. But the natives were not in sight! Gone, too, the twenty other camels, and among them those that carried the provisions and Captain John's ransom!

And when Dolly called aloud for Jane, Jane did not reply.

Len and Jane Burker had also disappeared.

CHAPTER XII.

LAST EFFORTS.

THIS disappearance of the natives and the camels placed Mrs. Branican and those who had remained faithful to her in a desperate position.

"There was a traitor in the crew," was the word first uttered by Zach Fren—and afterward heartily re-echoed by Godfrey. And treachery was but too evident under the circumstances.

Such also was Tom Marix's opinion, who was well aware of the fatal influence exercised over the natives by Len Burker.

Dolly alone would fain still give the missing ones the benefit of the doubt. She could not believe in the existence of such duplicity and infamy!

"May not Burker have been carried off as we were?"

"Carried off, just the very way the niggers went," said Zach bitterly, "just the same point of the compass as the camels bumped off our provisions, too!"

"And my poor Jane," murmured Dolly, "torn from my side without my knowing it!"

"That Len Burker wouldn't even leave her with you," continued Zach. "The wretch!"

"A wretch? Right! That's quite right!" added Jos Merritt. "If all this is not a plot, may I never lay my hand on the historical hat for which——"

Then turning to his servant:

"What do you think of that, Gin-Ghi?"

"*Ai ya*, Master Jos! I think I would have done a thousand, yes ten thousand times better if I had never set my foot in such an uncomfortable country."

"You might!" was the reply.

The scandalous plot was so self-evident that Mrs. Branican was obliged to credit it.

"But why have deceived me so?" she asked herself. "What have I done to Len Burker? Had I not forgotten the past? Did I not receive them as a sister would, both his unfortunate wife and himself? and he betrays us, leaves us without provisions, and steals away from me the price of my poor John's liberty! . . . . . Oh, why should he do so?"

Nobody knew Len Burker's secret, so no one could answer her. Jane alone would have been able to say what she knew of her husband's wretched plans, and Jane was no longer there.

It was but too true, however; Len Burker had just put into execution a long-meditated scheme, a scheme which seemed to have every chance of success. Under the promise of a liberal reward the native followers had been easily brought over to his views. In the middle of the storm, while two of the blacks carried Jane off without her being able to make herself heard, the others had driven the camels northward.

No one had perceived them in that night of darkness,

made denser still by the clouds of dust ; and, before light had dawned, Len Burker and his accomplices were already several miles east of Joanna Spring.

Jane being now away from Dolly, her husband was no longer afraid that, tormented by remorse, she might reveal the secret of Godfrey's birth. Besides there was every reason to believe that, without food or means of transport, Mrs. Branican and her party would perish among the wilds of the Great Sandy Desert.

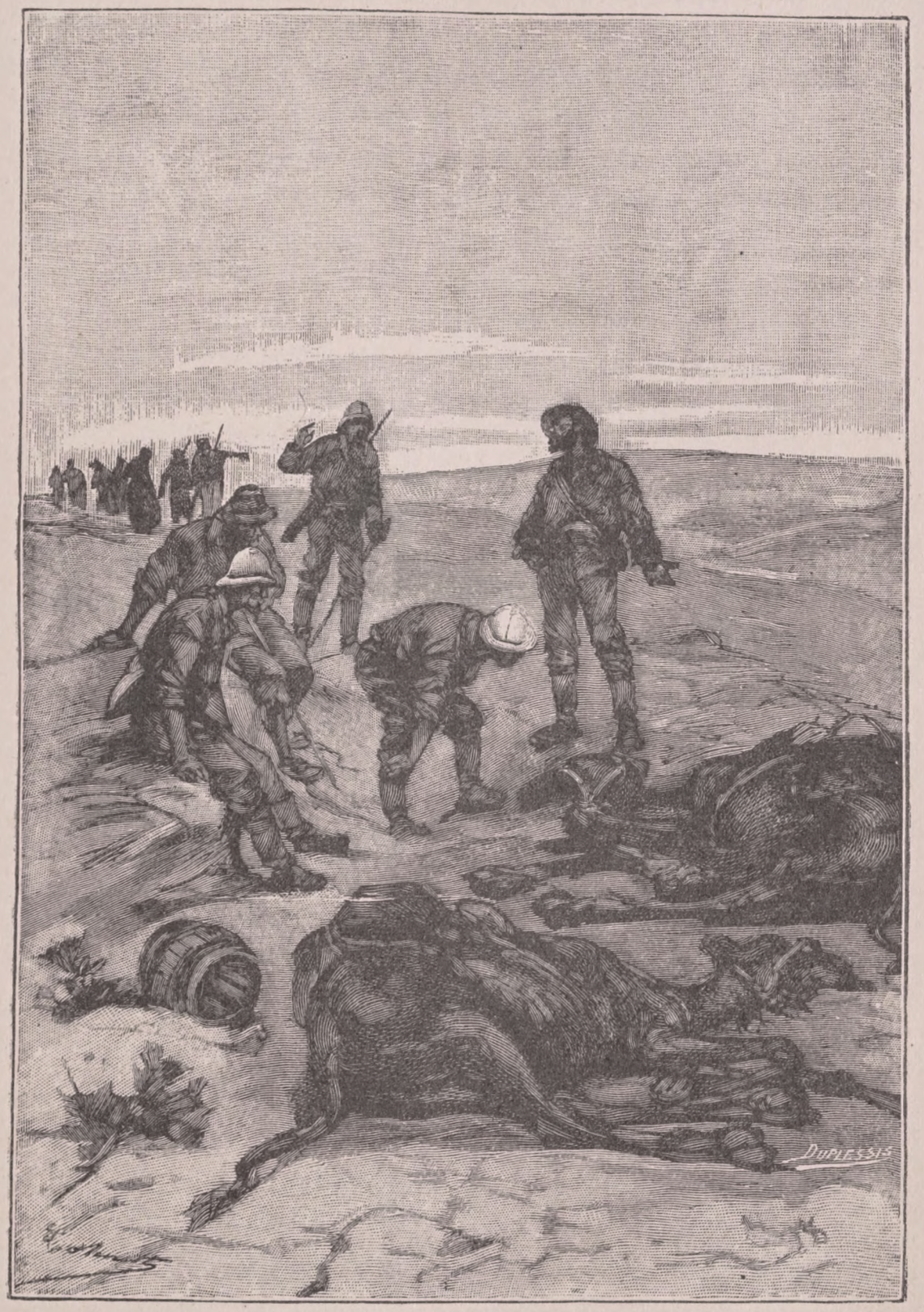
And in truth at Joanna Spring the caravan was still nearly 300 miles from the Fitz Roy River. During the time it would take to cover this long distance, how would Tom Marix support his party, reduced though it now was in number ?

Okaover is one of the principal affluents of the River Grey, which throws itself through one of its estuaries, in Witt Land, into the Indian Ocean.

On the banks of this river, the waters of which are never dried up by the heat, Marix found those shady oases of which Colonel Warburton spoke with such joy.

What a happy change this verdure and running water, from the interminable sandy plains and spinifex-covered mounds ! At the same time, if, when he reached this point, the colonel was assured of success, since he had only then to follow the creek as far as the Rockbonne settlement on the coast, it was not so with Mrs. Branican. Her situation, on the contrary, would only grow worse on her way through the arid regions that separate the Okaover from the Fitz Roy River.

The caravan was now composed of only twenty-two persons out of the forty-three who had started from Alice Spring : Dolly, her servant Harriet, Zach Fren, Tom Marix, Godfrey, Jos Merritt, Gin-Ghi and with them the fifteen men of the escort, two of whom were so seriously ill. For mounts four camels only, the others having been carried off by Len Burker, including the male leader of the



"THEY HAVE BEEN POISONED" (*p.* 341).

herd, and the one that carried the kibitka. The animal whose qualities were so much appreciated by Jos Merritt had also disappeared—which obliged the Englishman to travel on foot as well as his servant. In the way of food there remained but a few tins of preserves luckily discovered in a box which had fallen from one of the camels. No flour, coffee, tea, sugar or salt; no more spirits or any of the contents of the medicine-chest; and how could Dolly now care for the two sick men devoured with fever? It was the most absolute destitution in the middle of a country without any resource.

At the first gleam of day, Mrs. Branican gathered her little band together. The plucky woman had lost none of her truly superhuman energy, and with her inspiriting words she managed to revive the courage of her companions. The goal was now so near; they should not give way.

That goal, the most confident of the men could not have hoped to reach under present circumstances; yet the painful tramp was resumed. The sick men had been given two of the four camels, for they could not have been left at Joanna Spring, it being one of the uninhabited stations discovered by Colonel Warburton along his itinerary. But would these poor men have sufficient strength to support the journey to Fitz Roy, whence it would be possible to send them to some place on the coast? It was doubtful, and Mrs. Branican's heart sank at the idea of two more victims on the point of being added to those already made by the *Franklin* disaster.

And yet Dolly would not give up her endeavors! No! She would not postpone her search! Nothing would prevent her doing her duty—were she to be left alone!

On leaving the right bank of the Okaover Creek, which they forded one mile above Joanna Spring, they took a northeastern direction. By doing so Marix hoped to meet the

Fitz Roy, at the nearest point of the irregular bend it describes before wending its course toward the King's Gulf.

The heat was more bearable. The greatest entreaties,—almost an absolute order,—had been needed on the part of Marix and Fren to induce Dolly to ride one of the camels. Godfrey and Zach still kept up a good pace. Jos Merritt followed them closely, his long stiff legs reminding one of a pair of stilts. And when Mrs. Branican pressed her mount on him he declined the offer.

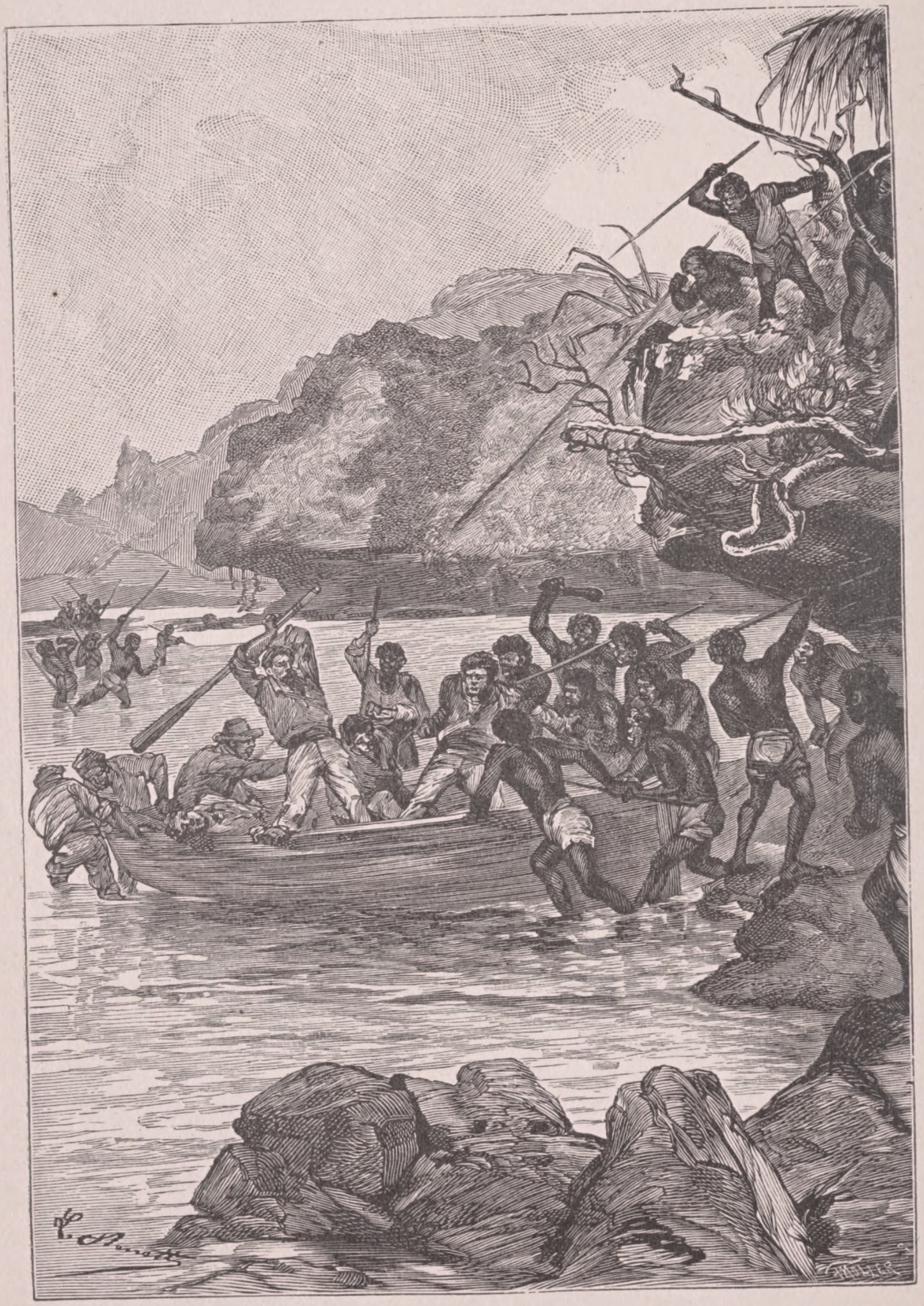
"That's right! That's quite right!" he said. "But an Englishman is an Englishman, you see, madam; a Chinaman is only a Chinaman; and I see no objection to your making the offer to Gin-Ghi. Only, I forbid him to accept it!"

Accordingly Gin-Ghi continued on foot, not without recriminating however, as he thought of the far-distant pleasures of Sco-Tcheou, the city of the flowery gondolas, the adored town of the Celestials.

The fourth camel was mostly used either by Tom Marix or Godfrey for reconnoitering ahead of the party. The supply of water procured at Okaover Creek would not hold out very long and then the terrible question of drink would once more stare them in the face.

On leaving the creek, a northerly direction was taken across a slightly undulated plain stretching out as far as the eye could see. Here the clumps of spinifex were not so thinly scattered, and various shrubs on which autumn had left her yellow tinge gave the district a less monotonous aspect. Perhaps by good luck some game might rise from among them. Marix, Godfrey, and Fren, who never parted with their arms, had thus been able to save their rifles and revolvers; and if the opportunity presented itself they would make good use of them, although their scanty supply of ammunition should, of course, be used sparingly.

For several days, a little headway was made in this man-



CAPTAIN JOHN WAS ATTACKED BY THE NATIVES (*p.* 344).

ner : a short stage in the morning, another in the evening. Nothing in the bed of the creeks in this territory but calcinated pebbles and weeds discolored with the heat. The sand did not show the least sign of humidity. It was therefore necessary to find out wells, to find out at least one every twenty-four hours, for there were no casks now in which to keep a supply.

And so Godfrey would be off, now to the right and then to the left of the caravan, as soon as he thought himself on the right track.

"My boy," Mrs. Branican would say to him, "do not do anything imprudent ! Do not expose yourself."

"Who would expose himself for you, ma'am, and Captain John, if I did not ?" the noble lad would reply.

Thanks to his self-denying perseverance as well as to a kind of instinct that guided his steps, he did discover a few wells, sometimes several miles out of their way north or south.

If therefore the tortures of thirst were not now absolutely unfelt, they were not excessive, at least in this portion of Tasmania lying between Okaover-Creek and the Fitz Roy river. The crowning of their fatigues was the insufficiency of their means of transport and the scarcity of food, which was now reduced to a few remnants of preserves, the want of tea and coffee, the privation of tobacco so painful to the escort men, and the utter impossibility of adding a few drops of alcohol to the brackish water they drank. The bravest of them would stagger and fall with weariness, exhaustion, and misery after two hours' struggling onward.

The animals, too, scarcely picked up anything to eat in the middle of this waste, where no green stalk or leaf could keep alive. No more of those dwarf acacias, the somewhat nutritive gum of which is sought after by the natives in times of famine. Nothing but the thorns of the dried-up mimosas mixed up with the tufts of spinifex. The poor

beasts, with outstretched necks and yielding limbs, dragged their feet along the ground, fell on their knees, and with great difficulty were made to stand up again.

During the afternoon of the 25th, Marix, Godfrey, and Fren were able to procure a little fresh food ; a number of wild pigeons passed over them in flocks. Very swift birds, especially when pursued, they were no easy game to bring down ; a few of them were shot, however, and needless to remark that, had they not been as excellent as they really were, the famishing party would have considered them the most delicious food. They were roasted before a fire of dried roots, and for the following two days Marix was enabled to economize his provisions.

But what fed the men was not sufficient to feed the animals. And, as a consequence, on the morning of the 26th one of the camels which carried the sick men fell heavily to the ground. It should be abandoned, for it was too weak to rise to its feet again.

To Tom Marix fell the task of ending its sufferings with a shot in the head. Then, so as not to lose any of the flesh, which represented several days' food, although the poor thing had become greatly emaciated through hunger, he began cutting it up after the Australian style.

Tom was not unaware that every part of the camel may be used as food. From the bones and a part of the skin, that were boiled in the only receptacle he now possessed, he obtained a soup which proved a great treat to the starving people. The brain, tongue, and cheeks of the animal, when properly prepared, furnish a more substantial meal.

The flesh cut into thin strips, and quickly dried in the sun, were preserved, along with the feet, which are the choicest part of the animal. It was regrettable they had no salt, for there would have been less difficulty in keeping the meat had it been salted.

A few miles a day were covered for two or three days

more. Meanwhile the state of the two invalids was growing worse, not, surely, through neglect but through want of medicine. It was evident that all would not reach the spot toward which they made such strenuous efforts : that Fitz-Roy River, where their miseries would in a certain measure be lessened !

And as a matter of fact the two men expired, one on March 28, and the other the following day. They were born in Adelaide, one of them was scarcely twenty-five years old, the other about forty ; and death overcame them both on this journey across the Australian desert.

Poor fellows ! they were the first to succumb in this expedition, and their companions were greatly affected. Was not this the fate that awaited them all, abandoned as they were, through Len Burker's treachery, in the middle of those regions on which even an animal could not find his sustenance.

And what could Zach Fren reply when Marix said to him :

"Two men dead to save one, not to mention those who are yet to fall ! "

Mrs. Branican gave full vent to her grief, a grief shared by all. She prayed for those two victims, and their grave was marked by a little cross, which the severity of the climate was likely to soon crumble to dust.

After which the caravan proceeded on its way.

Mrs. Branican positively refused to keep one of the three remaining camels for her own use, and they were all ridden by the more exhausted of the men one after another, so as not to delay the little progress that was made. The scouting for wells still devolved on Godfrey or Marix during the halts, for not a single native was met with from whom they could have procured information. This seemed to imply that the tribes had gone off toward the northeast of Tasmania, in which case the Indas would have to be followed

to the very end of the Fitz Roy Valley—an unfortunate circumstance, since the journey would thereby be lengthened by some hundred miles.

From the beginning of April Marix noticed that his supply of provisions was nearing its end. One of the three camels should, of necessity, be sacrificed. A few days' food thus assured would no doubt enable them to reach the Fitz Roy, from which they should now be no farther than twelve or fifteen of their stages.

This sacrifice being indispensable, they should resign themselves to it. The animal that appeared less fit for work was selected. It was killed and cut up into long strips. The favorite tidbits, not forgetting the heart and the liver, were carefully preserved as before.

Now and again Godfrey was able to shoot several pigeons—a small "bagful" it must be confessed, when the feeding of twenty persons was in question. Marix noticed too that the acacias began to reappear on the plain, and their seeds, previously roasted on a fire, were also used as food.

Yes! It was high time they should reach the Fitz Roy, to find there the resources that would have been sought for in vain in this forlorn country. But should it take a few days more to get to the river, most of these poor people would not have strength enough to reach it.

On the 5th of April there was positively no more food left, neither preserves nor camel flesh. A handful of acacia seeds was all that remained to Mrs. Branican and her companions.

In truth Tom Marix hesitated before killing the two surviving camels. When he thought of the distance they had yet to travel, he could not bring himself to sacrifice them. It should be done, however, and that very night, for nobody had eaten anything for fifteen hours.

But just at camping-time, one of his men ran up to him shouting :

"Marix ! Tom ! the two camels have just fallen."

"Try and get them up."

"We can't."

"Then kill them immediately."

"Kill them ?" cried the other. "Why, they are dying, if they are not dead already !"

"Dead !" cried Marix.

And he could not refrain from a gesture of despair ; for if they were dead their flesh would be unfit for use.

Followed by Mrs. Branican, Fren, Godfrey, and Jos Merritt, Marix hurried to the spot where the two camels had just dropped.

There, lying helplessly on the ground, they struggled in convulsions, their mouths frothing, their muscles contracted, their chests heaving painfully for breath. They were dying, and, obviously, dying an unnatural death.

"What has happened them ?" asked Dolly. "That cannot be mere fatigue or exhaustion."

"No," answered Marix, "I am afraid it is the effect of some poisonous weed !"

"That's right ! That's quite right ! I know what it is !" ejaculated Jos Merritt. "I've seen that before in the eastern provinces in Queensland ! These camels have been poisoned."

"Poisoned ?" repeated Dolly

"That's so," said Marix ; "it is indeed poison !"

"Well now," continued the Englishman, "since we have no other resource, we must take example from the cannibals rather than die of hunger ! What can be done ? Every country has its customs, you know ; and at Rome you must do as the Romans do !"

He said this with such a sting of irony that, what with

his eyes dilated by hunger, and his wan face thinner than it had ever been, he was frightful to behold.

So then the last two camels were poisoned. And this poisoning—Jos Merritt was not mistaken—was due to a kind of nettle, fortunately rather uncommon on these northwestern plains; it is the "moroïdes lasportea" which bears a raspberry-looking fruit and the leaves of which are lined with sharp prickles. Their mere contact causes great and lasting pain, and the fruit proves fatal if its effect is not immediately counteracted by the juice of the "colocasia macrorhiza," another plant which generally grows on the same soil as the poisonous nettle.

The instinct which usually makes animals turn away from injurious substances had, on this occasion, been overcome by a stronger sensation: the poor brutes had been incapable of resisting the cravings of hunger, and had just paid the terrible penalty.

What happened during the next two days neither Mrs. Branican nor any of her companions could remember. The two dead animals could not be touched, for in an hour's time they were in a state of complete decomposition, so swift is the effect of this vegetable poison. Then the caravan dragged along toward the Fitz Roy Valley, trying to ascertain its location by the undulating of the ground. Would they all be able to reach it? There were those among them who begged to be killed there and then, so as to be relieved from their horrible agony.

Mrs. Branican went from one to the other. She endeavored to revive them. She besought them to make one last effort. The end was not far off—just a little farther. There, near yonder horizon, it would be all over. But what could she obtain from the poor moribunds?

On the evening of April 8, no one had strength enough to see about pitching a camp. The exhausted creatures crawled along the ground to gnaw the dusty leaves of the

spinifex. They were unable to utter a word, unable to move any further. All sank, utterly exhausted, at this last halting-place.

Mrs. Branican alone kept to her feet. Crouching by her side, Godfrey clung to her with a last longing look. "Mother! mother!" he would whisper, even as a child calling on her who gave him birth not to let death carry him away.

And Dolly standing in the midst of her fallen companions, wildly searched the horizon, crying "John! John!"

As though the last help could come from Captain John.

CHAPTER XIII.

AMONG THE INDAS.

THE Indas tribe, composed of several hundred natives, men, women, and children, were at this time camping on the banks of the Fitz Roy, about 140 miles from its mouth. These natives had just returned from the upper part of the river and during the past few days their wanderings had brought them within twenty-five miles of that portion of the Great Sandy Desert where the caravan had just halted for the last time after a succession of trials which were beyond human endurance.

It was with these Indas that Captain John and his mate Harry Felton had lived for nine years. The following events, along with the account given by Felton on his death-bed, will suffice to make known what happened during that long period.

Between the years 1875 and 1881, it has not been forgotten, the crew of the *Franklin* had made their temporary home on Browse Island in the Indian Ocean, about

250 miles from York Sound. Two of the sailors having perished during the storm, the survivors, twelve in number, had lived on this island for six years, without any means of escape, when a drifting boat was cast upon the shore.

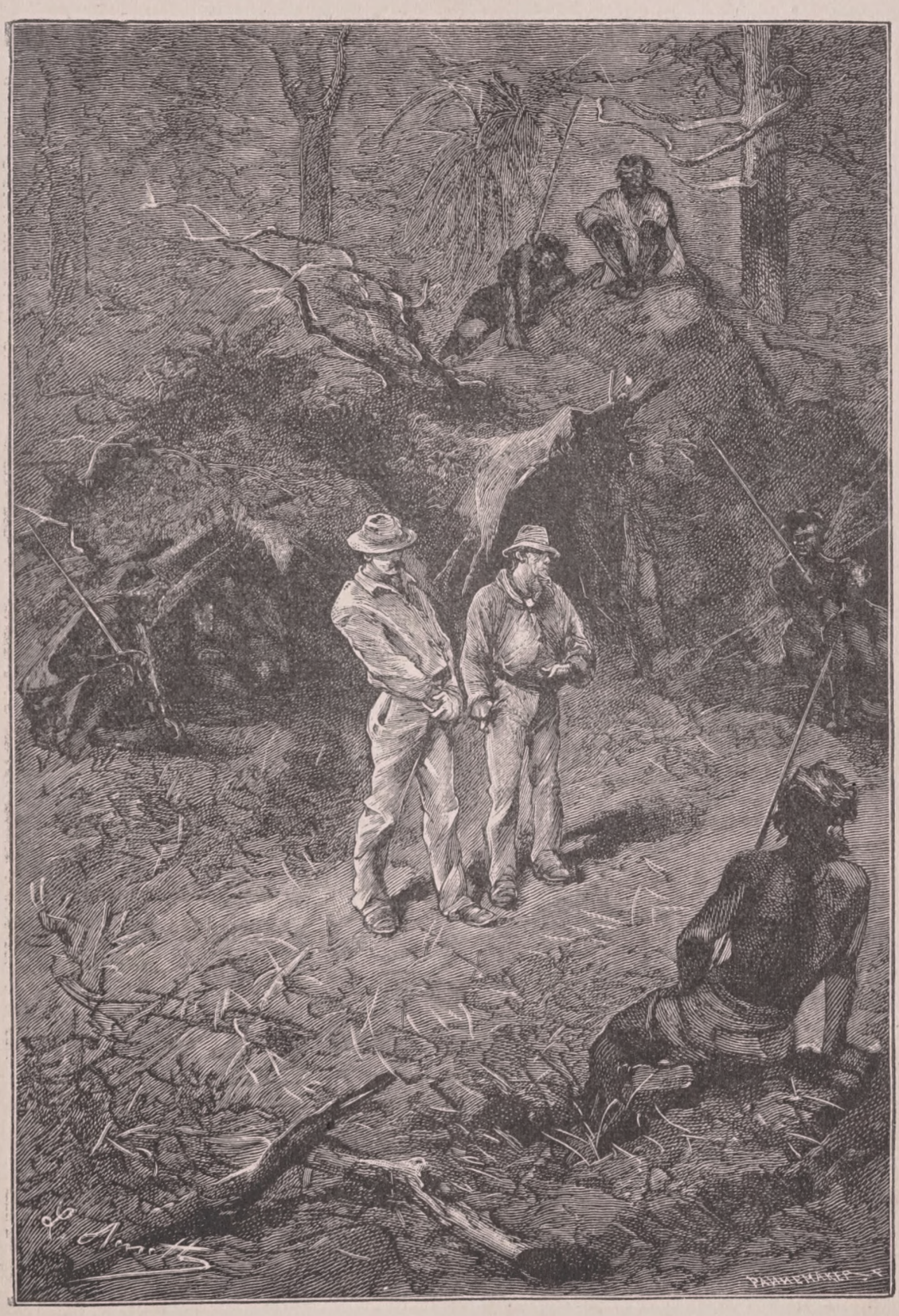
Captain John, anxious to use it as a means of escape, had it repaired as best it could be, and provisioned it for a voyage of some weeks' duration. But as the little skiff could hold but seven persons, Captain John, Harry Felton, and five men embarked in it, leaving the five others on Browse Island, with a promise to send a boat to their rescue. We know how these unfortunate men died ere any assistance could reach them, and in what conditions Captain Ellis found their remains at the time of the *Dolly's Hope's* second voyage in 1883.

After a stormy passage across those dangerous parts of the Indian Ocean, the boat sighted land off Cape Lévêque and at last entered the gulf into which the Fitz Roy flows.

But, as ill luck would have it, Captain John was attacked by the natives and lost four of his men while he and they vainly endeavored to save themselves from being captured.

The natives, who belonged to the Indas tribe, carried off the captain, Felton, and the only remaining sailor, into the interior. The sailor, however, had received a wound which was to prove fatal. Some few weeks later John Branican and Harry Felton were the only survivors of the seven who had landed.

Then commenced for them a life which, at its very start, was seriously threatened. We have already said that the Indas, as well as all the tribes of North Australia, whether nomadic or sedentary, are cruel and bloodthirsty. The prisoners they take in their incessant inter-tribal warfare are mercilessly slain and devoured. No custom has a greater hold on these aborigines, these wild beasts as they may be called.



KEPT IN SIGHT DAY AND NIGHT (*p.* 346).

Why were Captain John and his first mate spared? To circumstances alone was this due.

The inter-tribal warfare we have just mentioned is perpetuated from generation to generation. Among the sedentary tribes one village attacks another. They ruin each other and regale themselves on the prisoners they have made. With the nomads the same practices hold; they harass each other from encampment to encampment and victory always ends in horrible scenes of cannibalism. Indeed it may be looked upon as a foregone conclusion that these slaughters would of themselves inevitably result in the destruction of the Australian race, even though they were not seconded in this nefarious work by the proceedings of Anglo-Saxon policy—stamped though these have been, under certain circumstances, with shameful barbarity.

In this last connection the hatred of the Australian native for his British conqueror in general has been but too fully justified by individual cruelty. Hence it is rare indeed that any white man who falls into their hands should not be slaughtered without mercy. Why then had the survivors of the *Franklin* been spared by the Indas?

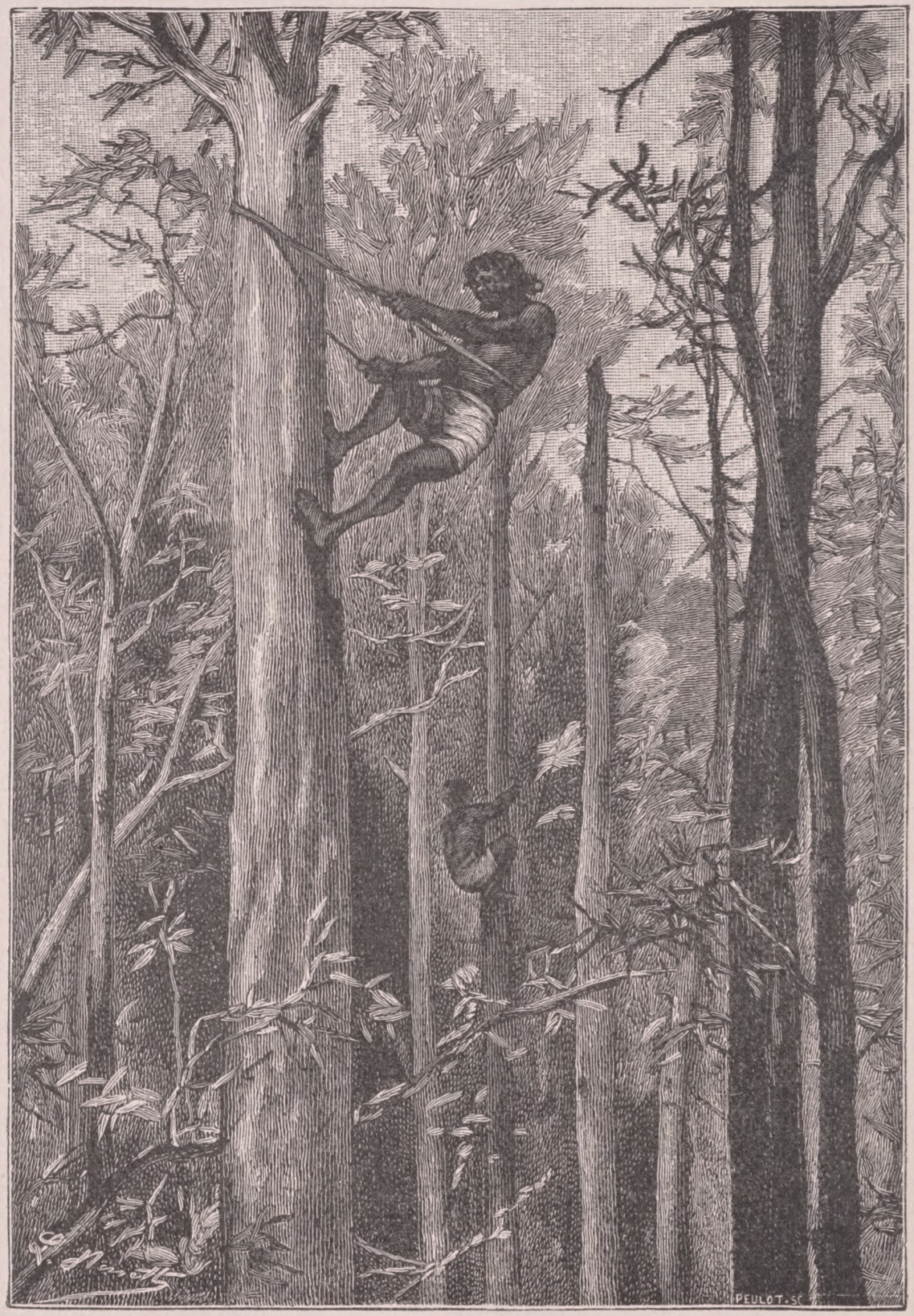
Very probably, had not the sailor died shortly after being made a prisoner, he would have shared the common fate. But the chief of the tribe, a potentate named Willi, in his previous transactions with the settlers along the coast, had become sufficiently familiar with the habits and customs of white men to feel convinced at first sight that John and Harry were two officers, a fact from which he might derive a twofold advantage. As a warrior—if this may be used in the sense of a "warring individual"—Willi could turn their strategetical talents to account in his encounters with rival tribes; as a trader who knew a thing or two about his business, he foresaw a lucrative affair, in other words a good round ransom for the two prisoners he had made.

Their life was accordingly spared, but they needs had to submit to the exigencies of the nomads' mode of existence, which was all the more painful to them as the Indas subjected them to an unceasing supervision. Kept in sight day and night, never allowed to go outside the camp lines, they had vainly attempted to escape on two or three occasions, each time at the risk of their lives.

Meanwhile, whenever their captors were on the eve of an engagement, they had been compelled to give them the benefit of their advice at least; advice which proved truly valuable and which Willi appreciated the more as he was henceforth sure of victory. As a matter of fact the tribe had by this time become one of the most powerful throughout the territories of Western Australia.

These northwestern tribes probably belong to a mixed race of Australians and Papuans. Like the latter the Indas wear their hair long and curly; their complexion is less dark than that of the natives of the southern provinces, who seem to belong to a more muscular stock; their height too is inferior. The men are physically better constituted than the women; their forehead is somewhat retreating, but their eyebrows are prominent, which, according to ethnologists, is a sign of intellectual power; the pupil of their eye is full of fire, while the iris is very dark; their hair, of a very brown shade, is not woolly like that of the African negro; still their cranium is not largely developed and nature seems to have but sparingly supplied them with brain matter. They are called blacks, although they are not of a Nubian black; indeed chocolate-colored would best describe the shade of their general complexion.

No hunting-dog has a keener scent than the Australian black. He recognizes the track of a human being or of an animal by merely sniffing the ground or even smelling the grass and the shrubs. His acoustic nerve, too, is so exceedingly sensitive that he can perceive—so it is said—the



WITH NO OTHER HELP THAN A "KAMIN" (*p.* 347).

noise made by a swarm of ants working in their nests under the ground. As to placing these aborigines in the natural order of climbers, such a classification would be anything but inaccurate, for they will climb any gum tree, however high or smooth-barked, with no other help than a twig of flexible rattan, which they call "kamin," and thanks also to a slightly prehensile conformation of their toes.

As we have already remarked in the case of the natives of the Finke River the Australian woman ages quickly and hardly ever reaches her fortieth year, an age which the men generally exceed by half a score of years in certain parts of Queensland.

On these wretched creatures devolves all that is laborious and tiresome in connection with the household ; they are slaves subjected to masters of pitiless severity ; *their* work it is to carry burdens, utensils or weapons, to look for edible roots, for the lizards, the worms, and the snakes which constitute the usual food of the tribe. If we make special mention of them right here, it is to have the opportunity of recording that they bestow loving care on their children, while the fathers are animated with very different feelings toward them, seeing that a child is an encumbrance for the mother who, while looking after him, can no longer attend exclusively to those requirements of the daily life of the tribe which depend upon her. Indeed, in times of famine, it is quite usual to see the poor little beings devoured by their parents in certain tribes where cannibalism still reigns supreme.

The truth is that with the Australian black—a being scarcely worthy to be included in the human species—life is concentrated in one single act. "Ammeri," "Ammeri" is a word that recurs continually in the native language, and it means "hunger." The most frequent gesture among them consists in their stroking their stomachs, for their stomachs are but too often empty. Living in countries void

of game or cereal products, they eat whenever an opportunity presents itself, at any time of the night or of the day, and always with the thought of a subsequent period of fasting. And, all things considered, what can these aborigines, —assuredly the most wretched of any scattered over the face of the world—live on? On a sort of coarsely made cake named "damper," kneaded without barm, and baked, not in an oven but under burning embers; on honey, which they are sometimes enabled to gather by felling the tree on the summit of which a swarm of bees may have constructed their hive; on that "kadjerah," a kind of white porridge obtained by the crushing of the fruit of the poisonous palm tree, subsequent to its being made less injurious by a delicate manipulation; on the eggs of jungle hens, which they find buried in the soil, if the heat has not already hatched them before they discover them, or on those pigeons, peculiar to Australia, which hang their nests at the very tip of the branches of trees. To these we may add certain kinds of larvæ, some of which they collect among the branches of the acacias, while they unearth others from the layer of woody matter in a state of decomposition which covers the ground in the dense portions of the forests; and that is all.

Need we wonder if, in such a struggle for life, cannibalism displays itself in its most hideous forms? It is no longer the visible expression of a naturally ferocious temperament; it is the consequence of an imperative want, and it has no other alternative but death. Hence the horrors it leads to are hardly fit to be recounted.

On the lower Murray valley, among the northern tribes, it is customary to slay the children for food, and, incidentally, to cut off one phalanx from the mother's fingers at every child taken from her for this purpose.

At the same time, it must be confessed that hunger is not the only motive which urges the Australian to cannibal-

LIFE AMONG THE NATIVES (*p.* 348).

ism : he has a decided taste for human flesh, which he calls "talgoro," a word meaning "the flesh that speaks" in his frightfully realistic language.

He does not indulge this taste on the grown-up people of his own tribe, but his incessant expeditions "abroad" have no other object than that of procuring talgoro, both for immediate use and for preserving. Dr. Carl Lumholtz relates that, during the whole of his journey through the northeastern provinces, the blacks of his escort had no other subject of conversation than this everlasting question of food. "Nothing like human flesh for an Australian," he often heard them say. Nor did they allude to white men's flesh when speaking thus, for it has (it would seem) a salty after-taste which is unpleasant to their refined palate.

One more factor there is at work, urging these tribes to mutual destruction. The Australians are very credulous. They are afraid of the voice of the "Krin'gan," an evil spirit which scours the country, and haunts in preference the gorges of mountainous districts—although this voice is no other than the melancholy cry of a beautiful bird, one of the most curious in Australian ornithology. Still, although they seem to believe in the existence of a superior and maleficent being, no traveler has ever known them to utter a prayer or ever seen among them the least vestige of religious practices.

Their superstition, however, leads them to the firm belief that their foe may suceeed in killing them by witchcraft, and accordingly they are forever on the *qui vive* to prevent his doing so by slaying him at the first opportunity.

We may note, by the way, that they show great respect for their dead. They will not allow them to lie in contact with the ground, but wrap the corpses in bundles of leaves and strips of bark, and usually lay them in shallow graves with their feet toward the east, unless (as is the case with certain tribes) they bury them standing upright.

The grave of a chief is, in addition, covered over with a hut, the door of which also looks to the east.

Let us add that, among the less savage tribes, travelers have found this belief, that the dead are to come to life again in the shape of a white man, so much so that, according to Lumholtz, there is but one word in their language for "spirit" and "white man." And according to another superstition,—a singular instance of metempsychosis backward,—the animals of the field were human beings once upon a time.

Such are those tribes of the Australian continent, doubtless fated to disappear some day, even as the inhabitants of Tasmania have disappeared. Such were the Indas, into whose power John Branican and Harry Felton had fallen.

After the death of their fellow-prisoner, they had followed their captors in their never-ending peregrinations through the center and the northwest. Now attacking hostile tribes, now repelling the attacks of others, the Indas gradually obtained an incontestable superiority over their enemies, thanks to the counsels of their captives. Hundreds of miles were thus traveled over, from King's Gulf to Van Dieman's Bay, between the Fitz Roy and Victoria valleys, and as far as the plains of Alexandra Land. And in this way John and his companion went through regions yet unknown to geographers and still left in blank on modern maps, in the east of Tasmania, of Arnheim, and of the Great Sandy Desert.

Excessively painful as these tramps proved to the prisoners, they seemed of no concern to the Indas. It has grown into their nature to live thus, without taking heed of distance, or even of time, of which they have but a vague idea. Indeed, when speaking of an event which is to happen in, say five or six months, a native will say, in good faith, that it will take place in two days, or in three days, or next week. His age he does not know ; the time of day

he has no idea of. He seems to occupy a place exclusively his own in the scale of the animal kingdom—even as do certain quadrupeds of his country.

To these ways and manners John and Harry had to get accustomed. The toils of this incessant roving they had to undergo. That food we have spoken of, sometimes so insufficient and always so repulsive, they had to be content with. And this, not to speak of those horrible scenes of cannibalism which they never succeeded in preventing when hundreds of foes lay on the battlefield.

While thus submitting to such a life, the captain and his mate were fully determined to attempt an escape as soon as their very submissiveness had caused their captors to relax their vigilance. And yet the dangers of a flight through the deserts of the northwest may be surmised from what we have said concerning Felton.

Meanwhile, however, they were watched so closely that, for nine long years, they were unable to avail themselves of any chance of escape that might offer itself. At last on one occasion—the very year previous to Mrs. Branican's voyage to Australia—it seemed as though they might carry out their intention. And it happened in the following manner:

A series of encounters with the tribes of the interior had brought the Indas on the banks of Lake Amedee, to the southwest of Alexandra Land. It was a rare occurrence for them to be so far inland. Captain John and Harry Felton, knowing that they were only about 300 miles from the Overland Telegraph Line, thought the opportunity a favorable one and decided to make the most of it. After due reflection, it seemed advisable that they should make their escape separately, and meet afterward a few miles from the camp. After managing to outwit his jailors, Felton had succeeded in reaching the place where he was to wait for his companion. Unfortunately John was called upon to attend on Willi, who required his services

for a wound which he had received in their last battle. He found it impossible, therefore, to get out of sight, and Felton waited for him in vain for several days, when, with the thought of reaching some station in the interior or on the coast, and organizing a rescue party, the faithful mate started off alone toward the southeast. But such were the fatigues, privations, and miseries he endured, that four months after his departure he fell dying on the bank of the Parru, in the district of Ulakarara, New South Wales. Brought to the hospital at Sydney, he had lingered for several weeks, and ultimately died, as we know, after acquainting Mrs. Branican with Captain John's whereabouts.

It was a hard blow to John to be deprived of his companion, and he needed a moral energy equal to his physical strength not to give way to despair. To whom would he speak now of all that was so dear to him, of his country, of San Diego, of the beloved beings he had left there, of his wife, of his son Wat who was growing up far away from him, and whom he might never see again, of William Andrew, of all his friends, in a word? John had been a prisoner with the Indas for nine years already, and how many more years would come and go before he regained his liberty? Still, he did not lose hope, being sustained by the thought that, should Felton ever reach any of the towns on the coast, he would do everything a man could do to rescue his captain.

During the first period of his captivity, John learned the native language, which, by the logic of its grammar, the preciseness of its terms, and its delicate expressions, would seem to imply that a time was when the indigenous Australian possessed a certain degree of civilization. In this way he had been able to explain to Willi how it would be to his advantage to allow his prisoners to return to Queensland or to South Australia, whence they could send him any ransom he would demand. But very suspicious by

nature, Willi turned a deaf ear to all such proposals. If the ransom came he would set Captain John and his mate free. As to relying on their promises, he probably judged of others according to his own standard, and accordingly declined to do so.

Indeed Felton's escape, which greatly irritated him, rendered the chief still more severe with Captain John. He was forbidden to go and come by himself during the halts or while on the march; and he had to endure the continual surveillance of a native whose very life depended on his watchfulness.

Long months dragged on and the prisoner heard nothing of his companion. Was it not probable that Felton had fallen on the way? Had the fugitive been able to reach Queensland or Adelaide, would he not ere this have made an effort to release the luckless prisoner?

During the first three months of the year 1891, that is at the beginning of the Australian summer, the tribe had moved to the Fitz Roy Valley, where Willi usually spent the warmer part of the season, and in which he found the necessary resources for his tribe.

They were still there at the beginning of April, having pitched their camp on a spot at an elbow of the river where a little affluent from the northern plains emptied itself.

Since the tribe had settled there, Captain John, who was quite aware of the proximity of the coast, had thought of making his way to it. If he succeeded, he might perhaps be able to take refuge in some of the settlements situated more to the south, where Colonel Warburton had ended his travels.

He had made up his mind to risk everything, life itself, to put an end to the hateful existence he led.

Unfortunately, a change in the plans of the tribe annihilated the hopes the prisoner had conceived. For, in the latter part of April, it became evident that Willi was pre-

paring to start off, so as to shift his winter camp higher up the river.

What had happened, and to what cause should he attribute this change in the customs of the tribe? He succeeded in ascertaining it, though not without great difficulty: if the tribe was about following the river higher up to the east, it was because the native police had been signaled on the lower portion of the Fitz Roy.

Nor has the reader forgotten the order issued to the police to search the northwestern territories as soon as Harry Felton's information concerning Captain John became known to the authorities.

The men engaged on this force are the terror of the natives, and display a zeal beyond conception when sent in pursuit of them. They are led by a captain, called the "Mani," having under him a sergeant, about thirty white men and eighty blacks, all mounted on good horses and armed with rifles, swords, and revolvers. This institution, known as the "native police," is sufficient to insure the safety of the settlers in the districts visited by them at different times. Their merciless retaliations may be blamed by some in the name of humanity, but are approved by others in the name of justice. They travel with incredible rapidity from one part of the territory to the other. Hence it is that the nomad tribes dread to meet them at any time; and that is why Willi, having learnt that they were in the neighborhood, was getting ready to go higher up the Fitz Roy.

But what meant danger for the Indas might mean liberty for Captain John. If he could but reach a detachment of this police, he was saved! And perhaps, while his people were busy raising their camp, he might find the means of escaping from them.

Did Willi suspect the plans his prisoner was making? It seemed as though he did; for, on the morning of the 20th of April, the door of the hut which was John's prison did

not open at the usual hour. A native was mounting guard outside. To the captive's questions no answer was given, and when he asked to be brought before Willi, his request was flatly refused. Nor did the chief himself come round to see his prisoner.

What could have happened? Were the Indas making all haste to get away from this spot? It was probable, for John could hear the noise of much going and coming around his hut.

A whole day passed by, then another. No change had been made in his situation. The prisoner was still closely watched. But, during the night of the 22d to the 23d of April, the noises outside ceased, and he began wondering whether the main body of the Indas had positively left the Fitz-Roy encampment.

The next day at daybreak, the door of his hut suddenly opened.

A man—a white—stood before him.

It was Len Burker.

CHAPTER XIV.

LEN BURKER'S LITTLE GAME.

IT was thirty-four days since Len Burker had broken away from Mrs. Branican and her companions on the night of the 22d and 23d of March. That simoon, so fatal to the latter, had given him the means of putting his plans into execution. Carrying off Jane among them, he and the blacks of the escort drove before them the stronger camels, one of which, as we said, was the bearer of Captain John's ransom.

Len Burker was in more favorable conditions than Dolly to overtake the Indas in the Fitz Roy Valley. Already

during his wandering life he had frequently been in communication with the Australian nomads, with whose customs and language he was well acquainted. The stolen ransom would assure him a welcome from Willi ; Captain John, thus rescued, would be in his power, and this time——

After abandoning the caravan, Len Burker hastened toward the northwest, and by daylight he and his accomplices were several miles away.

Jane implored and besought her husband not to leave Dolly and her companions in the middle of this desert, reminded him that this was adding another crime to that committed at Godfrey's birth, prayed him to redeem his atrocious conduct by restoring the child to his mother, and by joining his efforts to hers in trying to find Captain John.

She could obtain nothing from him. It was all in vain. It was in no human being's power to thwart Len Burker in his purpose. A few days more and he would have succeeded. Dolly and Godfrey having died through privation and misery, John Branican being thought lost, the Starter inheritance would pass into Jane's hands, and, with these millions, he would know what to do !

Nothing could be expected from this brute. He imposed silence on his wife, who gave way to his threats, knowing very well that had he no need to get possession of Dolly's fortune he would have abandoned her, too, long ago, or perhaps have done worse yet. As to escaping and trying to rejoin the caravan, how could she think of it? Alone, what would have become of her ! Besides, two of the blacks kept watch over her incessantly.

No need to recount the events of Burker's journey. He was well supplied with animals and provisions, his men, hardened to this sort of life, had been less fatigued than the whites since their departure from Adelaide ; and in such conditions they made rapid progress.

Seventeen days later, on April 8, Burker reached the

left bank of the Fitz Roy River, the very same day that Mrs. Branican and her companions fell exhausted at their last halting-place.

Here Burker met some natives from whom he ascertained the whereabouts of the Indas. Learning that the tribe had moved to the west of the valley, he determined to turn back in that direction, in the hope of putting himself in communication with Willi as quickly as possible.

His course was now clear of all obstacles. During this month of April, in Western Australia, despite the low latitude in which it lies, the climate is less excessive. It was evident that should Mrs. Branican's caravan have reached the Fitz Roy, its troubles would have been over. A few days later, they would have been with the Indas, for scarcely eighty-five miles separated John and Dolly from each other.

When Burker had acquired the certainty that he was within two or three days' march of the tribe, he ordered a halt. Taking Jane with him to the Indas, placing her of necessity in John's presence, and running the risk of her betraying him would hardly suit his designs. An encampment was accordingly made by his orders on the left bank of the river, and there, in spite of her prayers and entreaties, the unfortunate woman was left under guard of the two blacks.

This being done Len Burker, followed by his companions, continued westward, with the saddle-camels and the two animals that carried the prisoner's ransom.

It was on April 20th that he came up with the tribe, at the time when the Indas were made very uneasy by the proximity of the native police, who had been reported to him as being about ten miles away. Indeed Willi was already preparing to raise the camp, so as to seek refuge in the higher regions of Arnheim Land in North Australia.

Just then, by order of the chief and with a view to thwart

any attempt at escape, John was shut up in his hut ; and thus he was fated to hear nothing of Len Burker's transactions with the chief of the tribe.

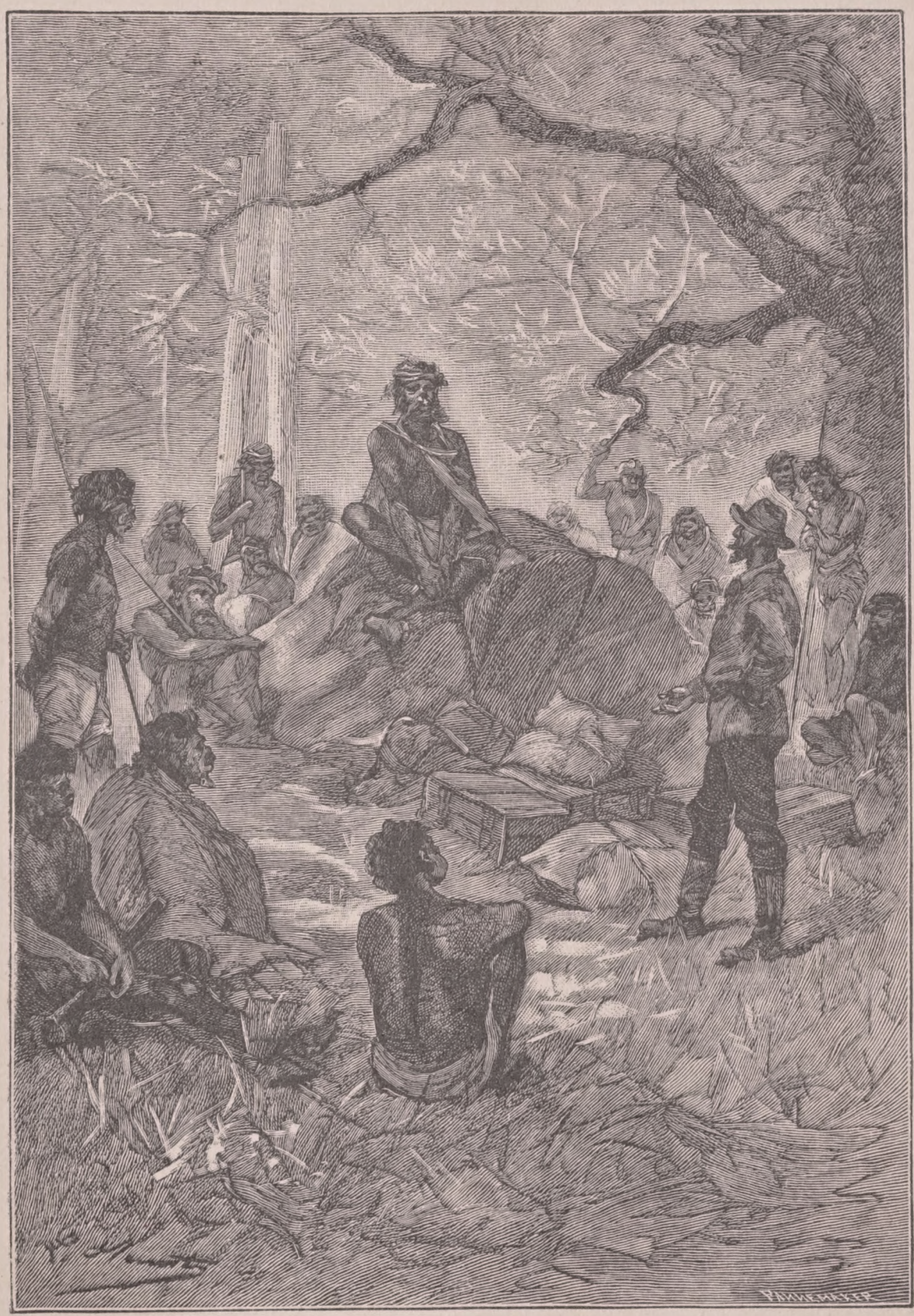
These transactions presented no difficulty. Burker had already had dealings with these natives. He was acquainted with their chief and openly told him the object of his present visit.

Willi was quite willing to give up his prisoner in exchange for a ransom. The show Burker displayed before him of the cloth stuff and knickknacks, and more especially of the tobacco, made a good impression upon him. Still, like a shrewd trader, he dwelt on his reluctance to part with such an important man as Captain John, who had been living among them for so long, and who had rendered him real services, etc., etc. Besides he knew that his prisoner was American ; indeed he was aware that an expedition had been organized to search for him—a fact that Burker confirmed by saying that he himself was the head of this expedition. Then when the latter heard of Willi's anxiety about the native police, he turned this circumstance to account by urging him to come to terms without delay. As a matter of fact, in Burker's own interest, it was of importance that Captain John's rescue be kept secret, and if he got the Indas away there was every possibility of his dark deeds remaining undiscovered. The final disappearance of John Branican could never be imputed to him, if his colored companions kept silent, and he would find the means to prevent their talking.

Willi eventually accepting the ransom, the bargain was closed on April 22d. That very evening the Indas left their camp and started up the Fitz Roy River.

That is what Len Burker had done, that is how he had attained his end. We shall now see to what use he was going to turn his present situation.

It was near eight o'clock on the morning of the 23d, as



THE DISPLAY MADE A GOOD IMPRESSION ON THE CHIEF (*p.* 358).

we have said, when the door of John's hut opened and he found himself face to face with Len Burker.

Fourteen years had rolled by since the day the captain had shaken hands with him for the last time when the *Franklin* had sailed from San Diego. He did not recognize him, but Len Burker was struck with the relatively little change noticeable in John. He had aged no doubt—he was then forty-three—but less than would have been imagined after so long a stay among the natives ; he had still the same sharply drawn features, the same old fire in his determined look ; his hair, though now gray, was as luxuriant as of yore. Still full of health and strength, John perhaps would have better endured the fatigues incidental to a flight across the deserts than Harry Felton, for whom they had proved too severe a trial.

On seeing Burker, Captain John retreated a step or two. It was the first time he had seen a white man since he had been made prisoner by the Indas. It was the first time that he was about to be spoken to by a stranger.

"Who are you ?" he asked.

"An American from San Diego."

"From San Diego ?"

"I am Len Burker."

"You ?"

Captain John ran to him and took both his hands in his. What ! This man Len Burker ! No ! It was impossible ! It was a mistake. He had misunderstood him. He must be dreaming. Len Burker—Jane's husband ?

And for the moment, John little thought of the aversion he once felt for Burker, for this man whom he had so justly suspected !

"Len Burker !" he repeated.

"Myself, John."

"Here, in these parts ! Alas ! So you, too, Len, have been made prisoner ?"

How could John otherwise explain his presence among the Indas.

"Not at all," quickly answered Burker. "No, John, I am here solely to ransom you from this tribe—to rescue you."

"To rescue me!"

The captain had to strain his every nerve to control himself. He fancied he felt as if he was on the point of going mad, as if his reason were leaving him.

At last, when he recovered self-possession, he would fain rush out of the hut. He dared not do so. Len Burker had spoken of his rescue; but was he really free? What about Willi? About the Indas?

"Speak, Len, tell me everything!" said he, folding his arms across his breast as though to prevent his heart from bursting.

Then Burker, according to the plan he had formed of only saying what would be to his advantage and giving himself all the credit of this expedition, was about to give his version of the story when John gasped, in a voice choking with emotion:

"Dolly? Dolly?"

"She is still alive, John."

"And Wat—my son?"

"Alive, too—both of them well—at San Diego."

"My wife—my child!" murmured John, his eyes full of tears.

Then he added:

"Now you can tell me anything, Len; I can bear everything now!"

And Burker, carrying his effrontery to the length of looking him in the face as he spoke, began:

"A few years ago, John, when no one could any longer doubt the fate of the *Franklin*, my wife and I had to leave San Diego and America. Important business called me to

Australia and I came to Sydney, where I had founded an agency. After our departure, Jane and Dolly never ceased corresponding together; you know the affection they had for each other, an affection that neither years nor distance could ever alter."

"Yes, I know!" said John. "Dolly and Jane were two great friends, and it must have been a cruel separation for them!"

"Very cruel, John," continued Burker, "but after a few years the day came when they would soon meet again. About eleven months ago we were preparing to leave Australia and return to San Diego, when an unexpected piece of news made us leave aside all thought of setting out. The fate of the *Franklin* had just been ascertained, as well as the locality of the catastrophe; and, at the same time, the rumor spread that the only survivor of the wreck was a prisoner with some Australian tribe; that it was you, John."

"But how was that known, Len? Did Felton——"

"Yes, this intelligence had been given by Harry Felton. Almost at the end of his journey, your companion was picked up on the banks of the Parru, in the south of Queensland, and brought to Sydney."

"Harry, my brave Harry!" cried the captain. "I knew he would not forget me! Then, of course, as soon as he got to Sydney he organized an expedition."

"He died," said Burker; "died from the fatigues he had sustained!"

"He died!" moaned John. "Good God! Felton dead!"

And a flood of tears burst from his eyes.

"But before dying," continued the other, "he was able to relate the events that had followed the loss of the *Franklin* on the rocks of Browse Island and how you reached the west of the continent. It was at his bedside that I myself learnt all this from his dying lips. After which he expired, John, murmuring your name."

"Harry, my poor friend!" sighed John, at the thought of the fearful miseries that had crushed the faithful companion he would never see again.

"John," went on Burker, "the loss of the *Franklin*, of which we had been without news for fourteen years, had caused considerable excitement. And you may guess the effect which was now produced by the announcement that you were alive. Harry Felton had left you, a few months previously, in the hands of a northern tribe. I immediately sent a telegram to Dolly, telling her that I was about to set out to rescue you from the Indas, as it should only be a question of a ransom from what Felton had said. Then, as soon as I had organized a caravan, of which I took command, Jane and I left Sydney. This was seven months ago. Yes, it has taken us that time to reach the Fitz Roy! But at last, with God's help, we did arrive."

"Thank you, Len; thank you!" exclaimed Captain John; "what you have done for me——"

"You would have done for me under the same circumstances," said Burker.

"Be sure of it! And your wife, Len, that plucky Jane, who was not afraid to face so many dangers, where is she?"

"Three days' journey up the river, with two of my men."

"I will be able to see her soon, then!"

"Yes, John; and if she is not here now, it is because I did not want her to come with me, not knowing how I should be received by the natives."

"But you did not come alone?" asked John.

"Oh, no, I have my escort with me; just a dozen blacks. We reached the valley two days ago."

"Two days?"

"Yes, and I spent them concluding my bargain with Willie. He was very unwilling to let you go, my dear fellow. He knew your importance, or rather your value.

I had to use a good deal of persuasion before he would agree to take a ransom for you."

"So then I am free?"

"As free as I am."

"And the natives?"

"They are gone, and their chief, too; we are the only people here."

"Gone?" cried John.

"See for yourself!"

In one bound the captain was out of the hut.

The Indas were no longer there; there remained but the few blacks of Burker's escort, standing near the river.

It is easy to see how truth and falsehood were mingled in Len Burker's tale. Of Dolly's fit of insanity he had said nothing; nor yet of the wealth that had become hers by Edward Starter's death. Not a word either had he spoken of the search undertaken by the *Dolly's Hope* through the Philippine Seas and the Torres Strait in 1879 and 1882. No hint had he given of Mrs. Branican's interview with Harry Felton on his death-bed; or of the expedition organized by the noble woman whom he had abandoned in the middle of the Great Sandy Desert—an expedition for which he claimed sole credit. He it was who had done everything; he it was who had rescued Captain John at the peril of his life.

And how could John have suspected the veracity of this story? How could he refrain from pouring forth his gratitude to the man who amid so many dangers had just torn him away from the Indas and was about restoring him to his wife and his child?

And he did do so in such terms as would have melted a less hardened heart. But Burker's conscience was proof against remorse, and nothing would hinder him from carrying out to the end the criminal projects he had medi-

tated. Now John would hasten to follow him to the encampment where Jane was awaiting them,—why should he hesitate?—and during the journey the wretch would find an opportunity to do away with him without being suspected by the blacks of his escort, who subsequently could not, even if they would, bear testimony against him.

In compliance with the rescued prisoner's natural desire, it was agreed that they should start the very same day. He was indeed longing to see Jane once more, his wife's faithful friend; to speak to her of Dolly, of their child, of Mr. Andrew, and of all those awaiting him at San Diego.

And accordingly they set out in the afternoon of the 23d of April. Len had provisions for a few days, and meanwhile the Fitz Roy River would supply the water necessary to the little party. The camels ridden by John and himself would enable them to get a few stages ahead of their escort; and this would facilitate the accomplishment of his designs. Captain John should not by any means reach the encampment, and he would not reach it.

At eight o'clock they halted for the night on the left bank of the river. The end of their journey was still too far distant to allow Burker to push on by himself, ahead of his men, through a region in which untoward encounters are always to be dreaded; and hence the little caravan was at its full when the tramp was resumed on the following morning.

The day was filled up by two stages, interrupted by a halt of two hours' duration; still it proved a toilsome day; it was not always an easy task to follow the course of the Fitz Roy River, whose banks were at times cut with deep creeks and in other places rendered impassable by inextricable groves of gum trees and eucalypti; this necessitated many a long detour; and no sooner was the evening meal over than the exhausted black men fell into a heavy sleep.

A few minutes later Captain John himself gave way not

"See for Yourself" (*p.* 363).

so much to a sense of fatigue as to the far mightier influence of the emotions he had experienced within the last twenty-four hours.

This might prove a favorable opportunity for Len Burker; for he, wretched man, was not asleep. Striking John, dragging his corpse just a few paces, hurling it into the river —the very circumstances seemed to combine to make all this easy of execution. The next morning a pretense of a search would be made for Captain John and all would be over.

About two in the morning Burker, rising without noise, crawled toward his victim, a dagger in his hand, and was about striking him when John awoke.

"I thought I heard you calling me," said the wretch.

"No, Len, old friend," answered John. "Just as I awoke I was dreaming of my poor Dolly and our boy."

A few hours later they continued their journey along the Fitz Roy River.

During the midday halt Burker, determined to bring matters to a close, as they were to reach the encampment that same night, proposed to John that they should start on, ahead of their foot companions.

John readily assented and both were about riding off when one of the blacks pointed to a white man coming toward them at a distance of a few hundred paces, evidently approaching with great caution.

A cry escaped from Burker's lips.

He had recognized Godfrey.

CHAPTER XV.

RETRIBUTION.

BLINDLY drawn by a kind of instinct, almost unconscious of what he was doing, Captain John had rushed toward the lad.

Len stood motionless as though his feet were riveted to the ground.

What ! Godfrey there, before his eyes ! Godfrey, their child ! Dolly's party must have survived, then. They must be close by, a few miles away, a few hundred yards perhaps, unless indeed Godfrey alone should have escaped the fate that the wretch had prepared for them.

However that might be, this unexpected meeting might destroy all his plans. If the lad spoke, he would say that Mrs. Branican was at the head of the rescuing party, that she had confronted a thousand dangers and untold fatigues to save her husband, that she was there, coming up the river in search of him.

And all this was a fact.

We know that on the 8th of April the little party, so heartlessly betrayed, had sunk to the ground exhausted for want of food, tortured by thirst, half dead.

Mrs. Branican's entreaties, the example of her own incredible fortitude had failed to revive their last remnant of energy ; she might as well have tried to spur so many corpses onward ; Godfrey himself had lost consciousness.

But the soul of the whole undertaking was still alive in Dolly ; and she did what her companions could no longer do. It was toward the northwest they had turned their faltering steps, to the northwest Marix and Fren were pointing their trembling hands ; in this direction Dolly madly set forth by herself.

In this wild waste stretching toward the west as far as the eye could reach, without provisions or means of transport of any kind, what did the brave woman hope to do ? Did she intend to make for the Fitz Roy River, to seek help either among the white settlers along the coast or among the native nomads ? She hardly knew, but on and on she went, and in three days covered some twenty miles. At last however her strength betrayed her, she too fell exhausted

in her turn and she never would have risen again had not assistance reached hér—providentially, it may truly be said.

At this time the black police was patrolling on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert ; and, having left some thirty of his men on the bank of the river, the chief officer, or Mani, had come to reconnoiter this part of the province with sixty subordinates.

It was in the course of this reconnoissance that they came upon Mrs. Branican. With the first word she uttered on returning to consciousness she told them of her companions ; with all possible speed they hastened to the spot she indicated and succeeded in restoring the poor fellows. It was time they had come ; twenty-four hours later not one of them would have been found alive.

Tom Marix, who had made the Mani's acquaintance in Queensland, gave him an account of what had taken place since they had left Adelaide. The latter seemed to have heard of Mrs. Branican's personal endeavors in search of her husband on the continent of Australia, and since Providence had placed her on his way he offered to accompany her.

In answer to Tom's inquiries the Mani stated that the Indas were then on the banks of the Fitz Roy River within sixty miles from the spot where they had met.

Nor was this officer unacquainted with Len Burker, whom he had once been commissioned to track at a time when he levied blackmail throughout Queensland with a band of bushrangers.

His provisions and his services, as well as those of his companions, were placed at Mrs. Branican's disposal. They all set off together on that same evening ; and in the afternoon of the 21st of April they reached the 17th parallel.

Here the Mani found the men he had left in surveillance by the riverside and heard from them that the Indas were about moving their camp higher up the river.

It was all-important to overtake them as quickly as possible, although Mrs. Branican had nothing now that she could give in exchange for her husband's liberty. As to that, the Mani, now at the head of his full brigade and aided by Tom Marix and his party, would not hesitate to use violence, if needs were, to rescue John from the Indas. Accordingly, the caravan pushed on briskly and on the 25th of April, Godfrey, whose ardor carried him on half a mile ahead, found himself suddenly face to face with Captain John.

Meanwhile Burker was slowly recovering from his surprise, and stared at Godfrey without saying a word, waiting to see what the lad would do or say.

Godfrey did not even notice him. His eyes could not turn away from the captain. Although he had never seen him he knew his features well from the photograph Mrs. Branican had given him. There was no doubt of it, the man standing before him was Captain Branican.

John, on his part, looked at Godfrey with no less emotion. Although he could not guess who this young boy was, he devoured him with his eyes. He held out his hand to him. He called to him in a trembling voice, yes, he called to him as though he had been his child.

"Captain John!" exclaimed Godfrey, rushing into his arms.

"Yes, it is I," answered the captain, "and you, my boy, who are you? Where do you come from? How do you know my name?"

Godfrey could not reply. He had become as pale as death on perceiving Len Burker, and was unable to overcome the feeling of horror he experienced at the sight.

"What! Len Burker?" he cried.

Burker, on considering the consequence of this meeting, thought he could not but congratulate himself on his good luck. Was it not an almost incredible piece of good fortune

that he should have Godfrey and John, the father and the child, both in his power?

"Len Burker!" repeated Godfrey.

"Yes, my child," answered John, "that is Len Burker, the man who saved me."

"Saved you?" cried Godfrey. "No, Captain John, no! Len Burker never saved you; he tried hard to ruin you. He abandoned us and ran away from us, stealing your ransom from Mrs. Branican."

At this word John uttered a cry and caught Godfrey by the hand.

"What! Dolly! My Dolly?" he repeated.

"Yes, Mrs. Branican, Captain John, your wife; and she'll be here presently!"

"What? Dolly?" said John once more.

"That boy is mad!" observed Burker, drawing toward Godfrey.

"Yes—mad," murmured the captain. "The poor boy must be mad!"

"Len Burker," Godfrey called out, trembling with passion, "you're a traitor, you are a murderer; and you, Captain John, don't be mistaken, if that murderer is here now, it is because he wanted to get rid of you after leaving Mrs. Branican and her companions to starve in the desert!"

"Dolly! Dolly!" gasped Captain John. "No, you're not mad, my boy, I believe you! come along, come!"

On a sign from Burker the men rushed on both of them.

Godfrey taking a revolver from his belt, shot one of the blacks in the heart, but the next moment Captain John and himself were overpowered and dragged in the direction of the river.

Fortunately Godfrey's shot had been heard; it was answered by shouts a few hundred paces away, and almost immediately the Mani and his agents, Tom Marix and his

companions, Mrs. Branican, Zach Fren, Jos Merritt and Gin-Ghi were seen rushing to the spot.

Len Burker and his men were not in sufficient force to resist the newcomers, and a moment later John was in Dolly's arms.

Len Burker's game was up. Should he be captured, he had no mercy to expect ; and accordingly he took to flight, followed by his colored attendants.

Immediately the Mani, Zach Fren, Tom Marix, Jos Merritt, and a dozen agents were on his footsteps.

How were it possible to depict the feelings, to express the emotion with which Dolly's heart and John's were overflowing? They wept with happiness and Godfrey shared in their embraces, their kisses, and their tears.

So much happiness told upon Dolly more than all her trials had been able to do. Her strength broke down, and she fell unconscious.

Godfrey, kneeling by her side, aided Harriet in her endeavors to revive her mistress. Was she now going to lose through an excess of joy that reason of which she had once already been bereft through an excess of grief? John was of course unaware of her former illness, and went on repeating, "Dolly! Dolly!"

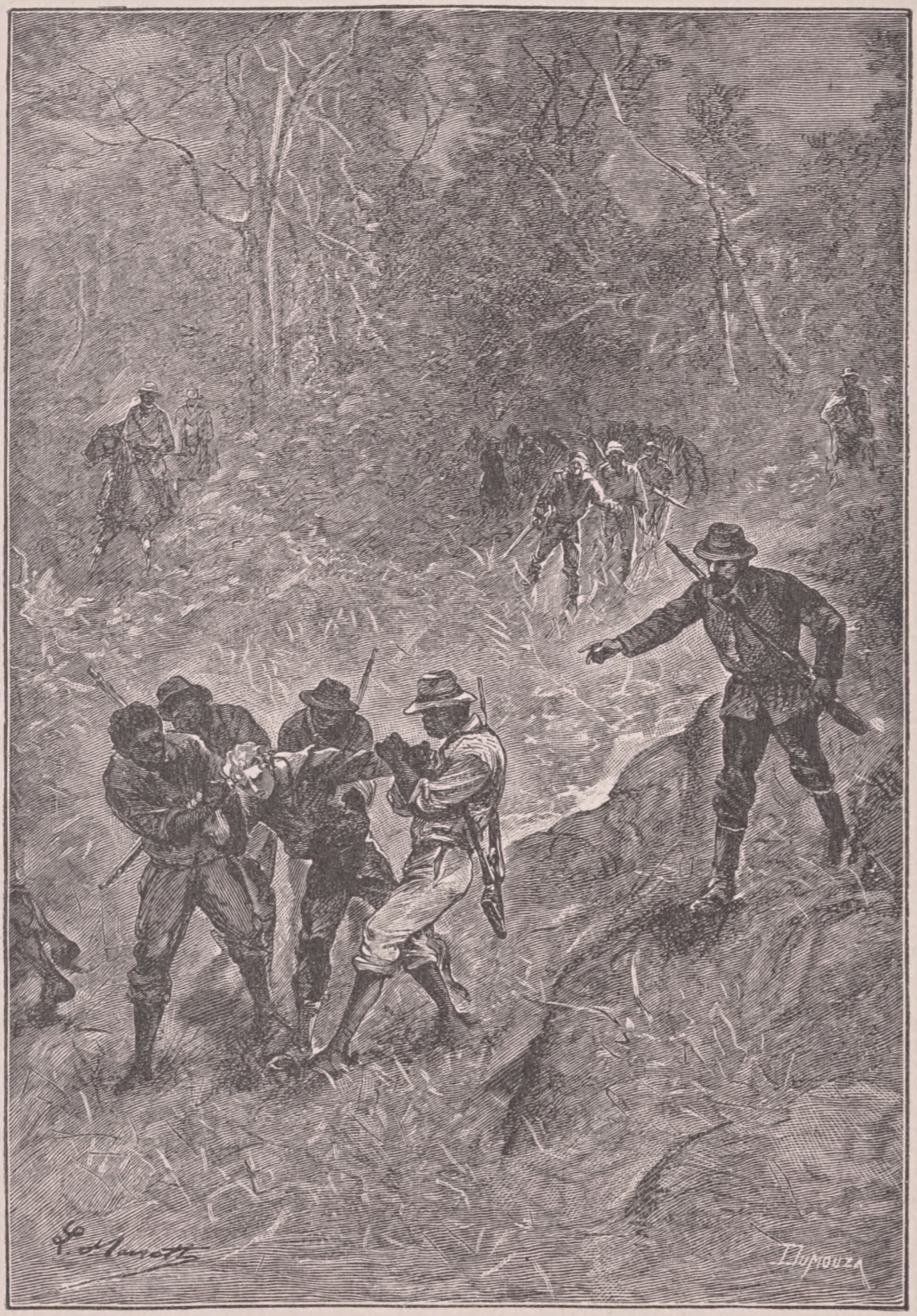
Godfrey, clutching her hands in his, called out, "Mother! Mother!"

Her eyes opened at last and she grasped John by the hand. He on his part held out his other arm to Godfrey, saying :

"Come, Wat! Come, my son!"

Dolly could not leave him under that illusion and allow him to believe that Godfrey was his child.

"No, John," said she, "No—Godfrey is not our son, and our poor little Wat was taken from us a short time after you went away."



THE NEXT MOMENT HE WAS OVERPOWERED (*p.* 369).

"Wat dead!" exclaimed John, his eyes riveted the while on Godfrey.

Dolly was about telling him the misfortune that had befallen them fifteen years before when the report of a gun was heard in the direction followed by the Mani and his companions in their pursuit of Burker.

Can it be the wretch had paid the penalty of his misdeeds, or was this a new crime that Burker had had time to commit?

Almost immediately the whole party reappeared on the bank of the Fitz Roy. Two of them were carrying a woman, whose blood flowed from a large wound and reddened the ground as they went.

It was Jane.

This is what had happened:

Len Burker, having a start on his pursuers, was already a few hundred paces away from them when he suddenly perceived Jane, and stopped short.

On the previous day she had succeeded in escaping from her guardians and had been, since then, following the course of the river. She had reached within a quarter of a mile of the spot where John and Godfrey had met, when the plucky lad fired on their cowardly assailants. On hearing the shot, she had quickened her steps and soon found herself face to face with her husband, who was fleeing in this direction.

At the thought that Jane would make her way to Dolly and would reveal to her the secret of Godfrey's birth, Burker's passion knew no bounds. He caught her by the arm and endeavored to drag her along with him; and as the poor creature resisted, he laid her low with a stab of his dagger.

At the same moment a gun-shot was heard, immediately followed by the remark—now, if ever, uttered in the right time and place:

"That's right! That's quite right!"

It was Jos Merritt, who had composedly taken aim at the murderer and had had the satisfaction of seeing him stagger helplessly down the bank of the river.

The wretched man's end had come. Jos Merritt's bullet had struck him dead.

Tom Marix rushed toward Jane, who was still breathing but very feebly, and helped the men to bring her over to Mrs. Branican.

On seeing Jane in such a state, Dolly uttered a heart-rending cry. She leaned over her dying cousin and listened for the beating of her heart and watched for the breath exhaled from her lips. But Jane's wound was deadly. Her husband's dagger had gone through her lungs.

"Jane! Jane!" she called aloud.

At the sound of this voice which recalled to her the happiest moments she had ever known, Jane half raised her eyelids, looked at Dolly and smiled, murmuring "Dolly, dear Dolly!"

Suddenly her eye brightened up, she had just perceived Captain John.

"John! You, John!" she said, but so low that her voice could scarcely be heard.

"Yes, Jane," replied the captain, "it is I; Dolly has found me at last."

"She has found you, John!" she murmured.

"Yes, Jane," said Dolly, "he is with us now; he will never leave us again. We shall bring him home, you and I."

Jane did not seem to hear. Her eyes wandered as though in search of some one, and her lips faintly whispered "Godfrey? Godfrey?" and a look of anguish darkened her features, already distorted by the throes of her agony.

Dolly beckoned Godfrey to draw nearer.

"Oh, at last!" gasped the dying woman, making a supreme effort to sit up.

"Come here, Dolly," she added in a lower tone, "come here, John. I have something yet to say to you."

Both leaned over her so as not to lose one of her words.

"John—Dolly," she murmured; "that lad Godfrey, there, is your child."

"Our child!" repeated Dolly tremblingly. And she became as pale as the dying creature before them.

"We have no child now," said John. "He is gone."

"Yes," replied Jane, "little Wat—in the harbor of San Diego. But you had a second child—and that is Godfrey."

Then in a few sentences, interrupted by the hiccough of death, Jane had strength enough to reveal to them what had taken place at Prospect House during the year that followed John's departure; how poor unconscious Dolly had given birth to a second child; how the little babe had been left in the street by Burker's order and had been picked up, as the reader knows.

And she added:

"If I have been guilty in not having the courage to tell you all before this, do forgive me now, Dolly; forgive me, John."

"What need have you of forgiveness, Jane, when you have restored our child to us?"

"Yes, your child," repeated Jane. "Before God I swear it, John—Dolly—Godfrey is your child."

And as both lovingly pressed Godfrey in their arms, a smile of happiness spread over the dying woman's countenance, and with a sigh of relief she peacefully passed away.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DENOUEMENT.

WE need hardly dwell upon the closing incidents of this tragic campaign across the continent of Australia, or on the very different conditions in which the homeward journey was accomplished.

The first question taken into consideration was whether the party should follow the Fitz Roy River down to some coast station,—Rockbonne, for instance,—or push toward Prince Frederick Harbor in York Sund. In either case, a considerable time should elapse before a ship could be dispatched for them; and so it seemed advisable to return by the route already traveled. Escorted by the black police. abundantly supplied with provisions by the Mani, and once more in possession of the camels stolen by Burker, the travelers need fear no untoward accident.

Before they took their departure, Jane Burker's body was laid to rest at the foot of a clump of gum trees. Dolly knelt by her grave and prayed for the soul of the ill-fated woman.

At last, on the 25th of April, Captain John, his wife, and his rescuers left the Fitz Roy River, under the guidance of the Mani, who had offered to accompany them to the nearest station on the Overland Telegraph Line.

So happy did they all feel that the fatigues of the journey passed by unnoticed; and Zach Fren, in his joy, would repeat to Marix:

"Well, Tom, we did find the captain after all!"

"Aye, aye, Zach, thanks to what?"

"Thanks to the mighty old jerk at the helm, given just in the nick of time by Providence. I guess nothing beats that, mate."

There was one, however, whose horizon was still marred with one little black speck.

"THAT LAD IS YOUR CHILD" (*p.* 373).

Mrs. Branican had found her husband ; but Jos Merritt had failed to discover the famous hat that had cost him so much toil and sacrifice. To have penetrated into the country of the Indas, and not have entered into communication with that Willi who was even now perhaps reveling in the possession of that historical headgear, was truly a piece of ill luck. He was somewhat consoled, it is true, by the Mani's positive assertion that the fashion of European headdresses had not yet reached the tribes of the northwest—far behind the progress of those of the northeast in that respect ; his dream could not possibly have been realized, therefore, in those parts. In any case, he could congratulate himself upon that memorable shot which had rid the world and the Branicans of "that Burker fiend," as Zach Fren called him.

The journey proceeded smartly ; nor did the caravan suffer much from thirst, the wells being now already filled by the autumnal rainfall, and the temperature keeping within bearable limits.

At the height of Lake Wood, the party reached for the first time one of the telegraph stations, and the news was soon scattered over the world that Mrs. Branican's bold undertaking had at last been crowned with success.

There the Mani and his men had to take leave of Captain John and Dolly, not, of course, without receiving all the grateful acknowledgments of their overflowing hearts, preliminary to the more substantial presents which the captain forwarded to them immediately on his arrival at Adelaide.

They now had only to follow the line through Alexandra Land as far as Alice Spring, where they arrived on the evening of the 19th of June, after a seven weeks' ride.

There, under the faithful guard of the station-master, Tom Marix found the full stock he had left on their way out, the oxen and the wagons, the buggies and the horses, for the remainder of the journey.

And so it came to pass that on the 31st of July the party boarded a train at Farina Town, and the next day entered Adelaide station.

The welcome given to Captain John and his undaunted wife has become historical.

A perfect ovation awaited them ; and when Captain John with his wife and his son appeared at the balcony of his hotel in King William Street, the thunder of hurrahs was such, according to Gin-Ghi, that it must have reached to the far distant confines of the Celestial Empire.

Their stay at Adelaide was naturally of short duration. How John and Dolly longed to return to San Diego, to their friends, to their home at Prospect House, where happiness was returning with them !

They therefore parted with Tom Marix and his men, whose services were liberally recompensed and would never be forgotten.

Another companion, whose memory would never fade either, was that crank, Jos Merritt, who determined to leave Australia too ; himself and his faithful attendant.

Forsooth, the undiscoverable hat was not in Australia ; where could it be?

Where ? Why, in a royal abode, where it was preserved with all the respect it was entitled to. Yes, Jos Merritt had been misled by erroneous information and had scoured the five parts of the world for a hat which lay in royal luxury at Windsor Castle, as he ascertained six months later. This was the hat or diadem-bonnet worn by Her Most Gracious Majesty when she was received by King Louis Philippe in 1845 ; and Jos Merritt must have been crazy, to say the least, to imagine that this *chef-d'œuvre* of a Parisian modiste could have ended its existence on the woolly head of an Australian savage !

His peregrinations, accordingly, came to an end, to the delight of Gin-Ghi, but to the intense grief of the famous

collector, who returned to Liverpool broken-hearted at being unable to complete his museum with this unique specimen.

Three weeks after leaving Adelaide on board the *Abraham Lincoln*, John, Dolly, and Godfrey Branican, accompanied by Zach Fren and the servant Harriet, landed at San Diego.

And shall we add that, not Mr. William Andrew and Captain Ellis alone, but the whole population greeted the happy return of one of San Diego's most renowned children ?

THE END.

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